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ABSTRACT

The primary goal of a project was to encourage students in adult basic education, General Educational Development, and English as a second language to express their thoughts and feelings through writing. Its objectives were to collect and publish exemplary student writings from adult education programs throughout the state of Pennsylvania and to empower adult education students by providing a vehicle for the public recognition of student writing. At least one piece was included from each of the more than 150 students who submitted writing to the publication. The final evaluation consisted of including an evaluation form with each copy of "Emerging Voices." (A copy of the adult education anthology is included. Contents include the following: poetry; a short story; a piece of writing to which an entire class contributed; and writing on these topics: travels throughout the world, letters to Mr. Clinton, Thanksgiving thoughts, and autobiographical writings. An author and title index is provided. The evaluation form is also included.) (YLB)

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LANCASTER
LEBANON
INTERMEDIATE
UNIT 13

Final Report

On the Write Track
A 353 Special Project
#98 - 3026

June 1993

Project Director: Sandra J. Strunk
Adult Enrichment Center
of
Lancaster Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13
31 South Duke Street
Lancaster, PA 17602
(717) 293 - 9639

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This project was developed under support from the U.S. Department of Education through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions of policies of the U. S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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ABSTRACT PAGE

Title: ON THE WRITE TRACK

Project No.: 98-3026 Funding: 5000

Project Director: SANDRA J. STRUNK Phone No.: 717-293-7639

Agency Address: ADULT ENRICHMENT CENTER, 31 SOUTH DUKE STREET, LANCASTER PA 17602

Description:

On the Write Track is a student writing project designed to empower adult learners by providing a vehicle for the public recognition of adult student writing.

Objectives:

The objective of this project was to collect and publish exemplary student writing from adult education programs throughout Pennsylvania.

Target Audience:

Adult Learners, Adult Education Instructors, Adult Education Administrators

Product(s)--if applicable:

EMERGING VOICES: A 1992-93 ADULT EDUCATION ANTHOLOGY

Method(s) of Evaluation:

An evaluation page has been distributed with the final product in order to solicit feedback from readers.

Findings:

The number of writing submissions received for this project for exceeded expectations. Although it was not possible to publish every submission, each adult learner who submitted work had at least one piece of writing published.

Conclusions:

The publication of student writing is tremendously exciting far adult learners and their instructors. Many adult education programs lack the financial resources and/or technology to undertake a publication of this nature. A state-wide publication is not only practical from a financial view point, but it adds to the prestige of the publication in the eyes of adult learners.

Descriptors: (To be completed only by AdvancE staff)

Introduction

On the Write Track is a student writing project designed to empower adult learners by providing a vehicle for the publication of student writing. This project grew out of a previous 353 special project, *Unheard Voices*, which piloted a creative writing curriculum for adult education students. As part of the *Unheard Voices* project, adult educators were asked to present creative writing lessons to their classes and submit examples of exemplary student writings resulting from these lessons. The quality and quantity of student writing submitted was totally unanticipated. Moreover, both students and instructors asked to submit writing that fell outside the parameters of the creative writing curriculum. State-wide there appeared to be tremendous interest in the publication of student writing.

Unlike *Unheard Voices*, On the Write Track is not tied to a specific curriculum or approach. From August 1992 through March 1993, instructors and adult learners were asked to submit examples of exemplary writing of any type. More than one-hundred and fifty students and fifteen adult education programs participated in the project. The subject matter of the submissions covers the spectrum of human experience ranging from autobiographical writings to haiku to essays. If there is a commonality, it is the candor that emanates from each selection. Some of the writing is uplifting while some of it is filled with despair. All of it is heart-felt.

The final product of this project, *Emerging Voices*, has a wide audience within the adult education arena. Those students who submitted writing to the publication are understandably proud of their achievement and anxious to share the publication with family and friends. When the adult learner sees his/her words in print, it validates his/her unique perspective and experience in the world. For the student reader who did not participate in the project, the publication offers a realistic text which accurately portrays the diversity and experiences of the adult student. In this respect, it stands in sharp contrast to many of the adult beginning readers currently available for use in the classroom. Finally, *Emerging Voices* provides the adult educator with a glimpse into the lives of his/her students and, subsequently, improves his/her ability to meet each student's educational needs.

Sandra J. Strunk was responsible for all facets of this project. Ms. Strunk coordinated editorial board meetings, solicited student writing, and prepared the final publication. The editorial board made decisions about what would and what would not be included in the publication. Additional copies of the project may be obtained from one of the following addresses:

AdvancE
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Ed.
PA Department of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Adult Enrichment Center
31 South Duke Street
Lancaster, PA 17602
(717) 293 - 7636

The Problem

The whole language approach to learning has been sadly overlooked in many adult education classrooms. For most adult learners, writing is a chore rather than a pleasure. Typically, adult students work on writing skills to pass the essay portion of the GED (General Educational Development) or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Unfortunately, the vital connection between the written word and self-expression is too often lost in a "teach to test" environment. Those adult learners who do write poetry and/or prose for their own self-satisfaction rarely think of sharing it with instructors or peers because it doesn't seem "relevant" to the adult education curriculum and they believe it isn't that good anyway. If it is true that writers improve by writing, educators are missing the boat by not tapping into the student's inherent need for self-expression.

Objectives

It was the primary goal of this project to encourage students in ABE, GED and ESL classrooms to express their thoughts and feelings through writing. The power of the written word is a difficult concept to communicate to an adult learner who has not experienced success with his/her writing in the past. The project provides a structure wherein the adult learner can achieve success with writing.

The specific objectives for this project are:

1. To collect and publish exemplary student writing from adult education programs throughout the state of Pennsylvania.
2. To empower adult education students by providing a vehicle for the public recognition of student writing.

The editorial board played a significant role in decision making throughout the duration of the project. In order to adhere to these goals, the editorial board decided that at least one piece would be included from each student who submitted writing to the publication. There was strong agreement that the project should not be competitive with only the best writers receiving recognition, but instead should attempt to portray the varied levels and abilities of adult students across the state.

In some instances it was necessary to choose pieces for publication from among the many submitted by a particular student. When this occurred, selections were made based on the quality of the writing. What little editing was done, was done solely for clarification and/or to correct minor errors in spelling or grammar. Every effort was made to preserve the texture and integrity of the original writing. As a publication by and for adults, it was decided that mild profanity would be permitted as long as it was not crude or offensive to readers.

Although the editorial board felt uncomfortable censoring student writing, it was agreed that *Emerging Voices* should not be a forum for the pontification of political or religious views. In fact, there was one instance in which a student's work was not published because it contained a diatribe against homosexuals. It was felt that this type of writing conflicted with the objectives of the project and detracted from the overall quality of the project.

Evaluation and Conclusions

The final evaluation for the project is dependent upon the feedback of the readers. An evaluation form was included with each copy of Emerging Voices. Preliminary reactions, particularly on the part of adult students, have been extremely positive. Based upon the response of

adult learners and instructors in submitting writing, there is little doubt that a state-wide student writing publication is needed. Many adult education programs lack the student population, financial resources, staff and technology to produce a publication of this nature. Yet, there is no mechanism in place for the continued funding of student publications. Although publications have been funded for the past two years through 353 special project funds, this is not a viable option for the future. Because 353 special projects are not, by definition, repetitive in nature, it is not possible to fund the same project for more than one year. Further, even if it were possible to fund the publication as a continuing 353 project, it would fall under the umbrella of the "mini-grant" and, as such, the available dollars would be extremely limited. Fifty students contributed to *Unheard Voices*, the first student writing publication. A year later, more than one-hundred fifty students submitted work to *Emerging Voices*. From the first year to the second, publication and postage costs more than doubled.

Adult educators do a great job of writing for and about the adult learner. Yet, if empowerment is part of the adult education mission, perhaps it is time to allow adult learners to contribute to the available literature on the subject. Who can better describe the world of the adult learner than the learner him/herself? Unfortunately, unless adult educators commit to funding adult student writing projects, there will continue to be a void within the adult education arena.

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Evaluation Form

EMERGING VOICES

An Adult Education Anthology
1992 - 93

Your reactions to this publication, both positive and negative, can help us improve the quality of future projects. Please take a few moments to complete this form. Your feedback will be greatly appreciated.

Directions: Please circle the number which best summarizes your reaction to this project.

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
Visual Appeal	1	2	3	4	5
Content	1	2	3	4	5
Classroom Applicability	1	2	3	4	5
Value as an Incentive for Student Writing	1	2	3	4	5
Overall Rating	1	2	3	4	5

What is your primary position:

☐ Student ☐ Adult Education Instructor ☐ Administrator

☐ Volunteer Tutor ☐ Other

Additional Comments:

Sandra J. Strunk
Adult Enrichment Center
31 South Duke Street
Lancaster, PA 17602

EMERGING VOICES

An Adult Education Anthology

1992 - 93

LANCASTER
LEBANON
INTERMEDIATE
UNIT 13

Published by
The Adult Enrichment Center
of
Lancaster- Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13

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EMERGING VOICES

An Adult Education Anthology 1992 - 93

Sandra J. Strunk, Editor

Published by
The Adult Enrichment Center
of
Lancaster - Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13
31 South Duke Street
Lancaster, PA 17602
under Federal Grant #98-3026

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or

AdvancE
PDE Resource Center
Pennsylvania Department of Education
333 Market Street
11th floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
1-800-992-2283 in Pennsylvania
(717) 783 - 9541 if calling from outside Pennsylvania

Equal Rights and Opportunities Policy

It is the policy of the Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit not to discriminate on the basis of sex, handicap, race, color and national origin in its education programs, activities or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504 and Title IV.

The Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit will take steps to assure that lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in all educational programs. Further assurance is given that services, activities and facilities are acceptable to and usable by handicapped persons.

For information regarding civil rights and grievance procedure, contact Edward J. Golden, Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator at 1110 Enterprise Road, East Petersburg, PA 17520, Telephone (717) 569-7331.

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Adult Learning Center
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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Even Start Program
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Even Start Program
Reading, Pennsylvania

Franklin County
SPOC Program
Chambersburg, Pennsylvania

Lancaster - Lebanon IU-13
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Lincoln Intermediate Unit #12
New Oxford, Pennsylvania

Mansfield Adult Education
Mansfield, Pennsylvania

Pen Argyl Area School District
Pen Argyle, Pennsylvania

Reading Area Community College
Reading, Pennsylvania

State Correctional Institution
of Huntingdon
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania

York Prison Program
York, Pennsylvania

Special thanks are also due to John Corse, Jr., Jaclyn Frey, Joe Morales and Lisa Sharp for their tireless proofreading and data processing assistance.

Most of all, I want to thank the one hundred and fifty-two adult education students who participated in this project for their willingness to share their thoughts, ideas, and visions with us.

Preface

There is an Ethiopian Proverb which says, "When the heart overflows, it comes out the mouth." As you read the following words of adult education students throughout Pennsylvania, there is little doubt these voices come directly from the heart.

This anthology covers the entire spectrum of human experience. Some of the writing is uplifting while some of it is filled with despair. What little editing has been done, was done solely for clarification and/or to correct minor errors in spelling or grammar. When changes have been made, every effort has been made to preserve the texture and integrity of the original writing. However, since most of the submissions were handwritten, there were times when it was particularly difficult to decipher words and even the names of the writers. I apologize for any errors that may have occurred.

This is the second year Lancaster - Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 has received 353 Special Project funds to publish student writings. Working with student writing is one of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of my work. Not only does it allow me to learn more about the world of the adult learner, but it reminds me of the tremendous wealth and diversity inherent in adult education.

It is exciting to introduce new writers to the power of the written word. When we publish student writing, we send adult learners the message that what they have to say is important and meaningful. Unfortunately, this is a new and unique experience for many adult students. It is my hope that adult education teachers, counselors and administrators will continue to send this message by supporting the publication of student writing in the future.

Sandra J. Strunk, Editor

Zura Moon

Hanging in your majesty so high
Behind looming clouds of grey in the eastern sky
My eyes are drawn to you
Until the morning dew
Your beauty is forever in my mind

Waxing and waning throughout the years
Full at your peak, dispelling all Fears
Darkness when new bringing only my tears
Till the crescent shall ring out bringing joy to my ears

Zura moon, amongst the stars
Lord knows only where you are
Perceptions invalid when glancing so far
Conceptions void when gazing inward

Such an ever-present being
Celestial body guide
Present for my ancestors eternal watching eye
You shall witness years to come
Things I'll never see
For where I am merely mortal
You shall always be

Zura moon
The moon's moon

Jesse Brackett

See a moonlit night
Bright stars glitter in the sky
Fresh air comforts me

Carmen Otero

Sitting

Sitting by a stream
With my feet in the water
Hearing the birds sing

Shawn K. Fake

Beautiful

Remembering the days of years ago sitting under the tree as the wind began to blow thinking and wondering...

White Butterfly
Butterfly, why do you follow me!
You're more beautiful than anything
I ever did see I want to touch you.
But you soar too high I want to love you.
I cannot fly, where will you be
when summer is gone? Some other
Land where the air is nice and warm
As the sunlight reflects off your
Beautiful white wings as you begin to
Soar whenever I look to the sky
I'll always remember my Beautiful
White Butterfly

Tyrone Wilson

SPRING

SPRING COMES TO ME
DEATH COMES TO LIFE
RAIN COMES TO FEED
SUN COMES TO WARM
FLOWERS COME TO BLOOM
SMELLS COME TO AIR
BEES COME TO BUZZ
LEAVES COME TO BUD
ROBINS COME TO NEST
FROGS COME TO SING
CHILDREN COME TO PLAY
SPRING COME TO ME

Charles Turiano

Sitting on my steps
Eating a bag of stale chips
Drinking a cola

Taalib Muhammad Ali

I Wonder

I wonder where I'm going
I wonder where I'll be
I wonder where the world will be
In the year 2003.
I wonder how it will look
And how many people will live.
I wonder with all of these diseases
When the world's going to end.
Everybody's dying - one, two, three.
I wonder if they'll have a cure
Before we all die in another war.
I wonder how we'd act
If the world was nice and neat.
I wonder if this gang stuff will ever cease.
Friends dying and babies crying
Lying in a puddle of blood.
I wonder if they'll drop a bomb
Then the world's gonna disappear
No more crying, no more tears.
I wonder if I'll ever live to see that year.
I wonder!

Luis Hopkins

Sometimes I am wondering why
Unspoken feelings can cut you so deep like a knife?
Right now I feel like my life is hanging
Only by the tip of my lips.
Walls like buildings surrounded
The golden key to unlock the door of my dream.
For all I know God has plans for me behind that wall.
I must break every wall that stands in front of me
So I can reach that golden key
To open every door of my dreams
And let them come to life.

Khom Tuy

Winter is ending
Spring is coming very soon.
End, winter, just end.

Irma Burgos

Ponder

Is death when you die?
If it is tell me why
Won't our soul live forever
Till eternity ends?

And when the sun reaches bottom
Of the ocean so deep
Will our tears really matter
Over days and the weeks?

Jesse Brackett

This is Spring

Tis but few reflections
on this fourth of the year.
Hemstitch though they be,
merely probing, I fear.
Inamorata defiles the snare
of this exponential quest.
Some will invoke the birds, other the bees
and flowers, I guess.

Innocence draped about us
like a perfunctory kiss,
Sealing off our incongruities
for our room to reminisce

Searching for immortality
as though
Prescience were our lot.
Rapaciously groping
for signs of the vernal equinox.
Intraocular wisdom
we all well rehearse,
Navigates but little
our inchoate knowledge of the universe,
Guides imperfectly to constellations of desiderata.

Jafar Saidi

LAST NIGHT I SPOKE TO AN ANGEL

Late last night I spoke to an angel
And asked if he could find
A perfectly created lady
Who was warm, sweet and kind.

I asked that she be gentle
And understanding too
And possess that special ability
To change my gray skies blue

She need not be wealthy
Or have any great fame
Just always be there for me
And I'll love her just the same.

For some strange reason I felt
That my request fell on deaf ears,
So I decided to try again with hopes
That my angel might now appear.

So this time I asked the angel to send me
Someone I could think highly of,
And bless her with all the qualities
That are gifts from up above.

Still there was no answer
So I decided to go to sleep
When a voice said, "The lady you
Have is the one you should keep."

"Because not only is she special
But she's the best that we can give
So always treat her with kindness
For as long as you shall live."

"And keep this special thought
Always with you-
As long as you believe in love
Your dreams will all come true."

Donald Granberry

PROGRESS

An eagle soared above the clouds
As on a hill a lone wolf howled
The sky was blue and sunny gold
And down the highway thunder rolled

There came a rider on the wind
Like his older pagan kin
Who wandered lands of ages gone
When men of freedom freely roamed

The world was then a younger place
With room to breathe and elbow space
Now, it seems, it's changed a bit
Till there's hardly room to spit

In times gone by a man could run
From dawn 'til darkness took the sun
And wander far and wide as free
As his own wild blood did choose to be

But now the nomad's world is bound
By walls and fences all around
And in the name of legal right
The law itself dims freedom's light

No more do gypsies rove at will
And wolves no longer roam the hills
These days eagles seldom fly
Across the vastness of the sky

They call it progress, all this change
That cages wolves and fences range
That eagles now are mighty rare
Only a few still left up there

The land itself is locked up tight
By laws that say that black is white
And up is down and sideways too
And wrong is right and lies are true

The very hills have been torn down
To put the earth on equal ground
And men are taught to play the game
To follow rules and not complain

Pay your taxes; walk, don't run
And don't get busted having fun
Be just like the other guy
And watch TV until you die

William A. Lovasz

Passion is an emotion that can't be controlled
Sometimes you fall so deep into it you drown
Not wanting to be saved
Not caring what happens
It's passion that's ruling your life
Not having enough confidence in yourself
You really are someone special
Looking for someone to take on the world
I won't be your mother
So don't blame me when you can't stand tall
Because you're afraid of the others
So be a man, take a stand
Don't let the passion drive you out of control

Rachael Williams

Our lives and goals have taken
Different turns through the months
But our friendship has remained
Intact
I guess that's because we've
Shared it
All laughs and hopes

Your friendship is important to me
And so is your happiness
That's why I always wish you
All the good times you deserve
And I always will remember

José Santiago

Christmas

The white snow falling
Joy, miracles, happiness
Children's laughter glows

Carmen Rosa

A DAY BY THE OLD WASHING MACHINE

Late one summer night,
me, my pal and his pipe,
Stood by an old washing machine
like trustworthy knights by their queen,
With our white balls of fire
(that controlled our desire)
I split them just right
by the light of the night.
As small as can be, yet bigger for me.
When we smoked them all,
we started to crawl -
We were looking for more
all over the floor,
When he started to stand
with one in his hand.
It went in his pipe,
as I looked for a light
While he was taking a hit
I was having a fit.
Green flares rose higher
as I began to perspire.
He began to choke
from the rich blue smoke,
A strong scent of Tide
made my eyes open wide.
And as he passed out
I didn't bother to shout,
because I took off and ran fast,
like an old memory from my past.
The life of a crack-head
is bound to leave you dead.
This, I had learned,
when my good luck had turned.
Now I am in jail,
with many years and no bail.
This message is true,
I hope you see things through.
Don't follow the wrong trail,
because you're bound to fail.
Cocaine is no joke,
So please don't smoke.
And don't ever use,
if you don't want to lose.

Angel Luis Thomas

BLACK NUBIAN QUEEN

I, your child, am presenting her most beautiful BLACK QUEEN
with this poem.
I love you and respect you with all my heart and soul
BLACK QUEEN.
Your love to me is the most colorful and warmest love a child
like me could have.
Your spirit BLACK QUEEN is most lifting like an angel in the night
coming down from the heavens.
This day of giving respect to the one that bore me is my favorite day,
but everyday BLACK NUBIAN QUEENS all over the world
should be treated this way.
The day I was born I know I was blessed with a BLACK QUEEN
a strong QUEEN, a loving QUEEN, a giving QUEEN,
a blessed QUEEN.
This day is yours so is every other day in the name of GOD.
I, your child, am presenting her most beautiful BLACK QUEEN
with this poem for you to cherish for all of your
graceful days.

I love you Mom.

Crystal Striver

The Elderly

They live in nursing homes they don't like.
Sometimes the only feeling they know is fright.
A stranger's face is all they see.
When they awake in the night calling, "Please help me."
They call out a name of someone you don't know or maybe
They think they have to go.
Time has not been very kind.
Little by little it has taken bits of their minds.
Some remember things from days gone by,
Others can't and wonder why.
They are very precious all the same.
Especially the ones who can't remember their names.
A tender smile, a loving touch is what they need so very much.
Always remember that they are people too,
And one day it will happen to me and you.

Pennie Kolb

Say Yes

My love the one and only
i've been with you for a while and you
A Missup Dream

Sleep street within this quiet
room as i lay beside you like a
work of art, and don't let no
moonful yesterdays disturb my
peaceful heart. Nor let no more
tomorrows awake my resting heart.
Then i rest with the hope of becoming
but my maker, my chanceless friend,
her love surrounds me still.
So forget myself and all the world.
Put out each burning light and all the
stars are shining on me as i tell her,
my love, good night.

Michquale Jones

Lost Love

Someday, when we're old and gray
We'll remember those special days
When you and I were together
Hoping that we'd last forever.

We laughed, smiled, joked, and cried
With falling tears we couldn't hide.
The love we shared, the more we cared.
Those days have long gone by
So now I sit: Where's time fly?

I cry and mourn for my lost love.

Tina Wright

Memories

My coffee-rich land
Where love and tenderness grow
Life: my friends and family

Christina Carcamo

El Rey

Me asegurare que tu piel
sea flor cada vez que te
haga el amor.

Me asegurare que nunca pierdas
esa sonrisa que me mata de ti

Te entregare lo que quieras
de mi, eres dueno y me haces feliz.

Te esparare si algun dia te va
Y si no vuelves morire con este amor.

Porque tu eres el rey de mi corazon,
de mis ojos, de mi boca, y de
cualquier parte que tu
quieras.

Porque tu eres el rey que yo
siempre seguire en las buenas
y en las malas contigo yo estare.

Porque tu eres el rey de mi corazon
Porque tu eres el rey de mi vida
porque tu eres es rey, el rey de
mi amor.

Maria A. Pichardo

The King

I will make sure that your skin
will be like a rose every time
I make love to you.

I will make sure you'll never lose
that smile that I love so much.

I will give you anything you want
from me, I am yours, and you make
me happy.

I will wait for you if someday you
leave and don't return. I will die
with this love for you.

Because you are the king of my heart,
eyes, mouth, and every part of my body.

Because you are the king, that is why
I'll always follow you in the good and
bad times. I will always be there for
you.

Because you are the king of my heart,
the king of my life, the king, king of
my love.

Maria A. Pichardo

The Night Before Christmas

'T'was the night before Christmas
And all through the garage not a creature was stirring
not even my Dodge; The inner tubes were hung on the
workbench with care, in hopes that Santa would fill
them with air.
The children were nestled all snug in their beds
while visions of tiny race cars danced in their heads.
Mamma in her kerchief and I in my cap had just settled
down for a long winter's nap.
When out in the garage there rose such a clatter, I
sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
To my surprise, here was Santa dressed in fur attire,
from his head to his toes, Oh! so jolly and quick.
He filled all the tubes, laying his finger aside his nose,
He got in the old Dodge and out the garage doors he drove.
I heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight,
"In this old heap, it will take me all night!"

Alta Miller

BALLOONS

Floating through the air
Sailing higher in the sky
Like diamonds shining.

C. Warnock

If I Could Love More

I would become the rain
Falling softly and gently upon your body,
And I would become the sun -
Shining my warmth so intensely you'd even feel cold.
And I would become the moon-
Filling your soul to its summit with romance;
And I would become the wind.
But, allowing the gentle breezes to drift through your hair,
I would become the sea--
Washing the bad memories of life
away and engraving your happiest moments
amidst the sands, But I am only me.
And this is all I can ever do; love you more
That should there ever be an ending to time,
To the rain, the sun, the moon, the wind, and the sea,
I would become love and free.

Virginia Roupp

Two Old Souls

Our love is ever changing, like the
seasons of the year.
It has seen us through so many things
like sorrow, joy and cheer.
It is much like a rollercoaster, going
up and then down, when it's up we are smiling
when it's down we wear a frown.
It has held us together, through thick
and through thin, and taught us to keep
going and never give in.
I sometimes feel like we're an old pair of
shoes, and one without the other, just wouldn't do.
So we might as well face it, we're partners
for life, cause you'll always be my husband
and I'll always be your wife.

Donna Knowles

The Imperfection of Words

If my words could be like the eastern wind
Flowing across the desert to you
If your words could be like the tide
Coming towards the shore to me
If my words could have some meaning
Then God knows then they'd be
But until you hear my words my love
They will cease to be

Jesse Brackett

One day I took a breath
then got arrested for theft.
This just wasn't my day
for I knew I was on the way,
to the big house, or should I say jail.
Had no money, so couldn't pay bail,
but I kept a tight grip on my soap,
it hung from my neck on a piece of rope.
Then one day I finally got out.
Opened the door and left out a shout.
Hurrah, I'm free again.
Never go back to that pen.
Til the day I met my match,
a bullet I could not catch,
like a stab from my knife,
but that bullet took my life.

Brian Phelan

A Teardrop

A teardrop on my cheek
is all it seems to be.
A teardrop on my cheek
shed for you and me.
A teardrop lost and lonely,
lonely as I am for you.
A teardrop slowly sliding,
falling as I fell for you.
A teardrop being wiped away
as easily as I was from you.

Susan Beckett

Fog On The Window

I've spent most of my life
trying to figure what love's about
I'm always on the inside
still trying to see out.
There's love that makes you happy
There's love that makes you sad
There's love that makes you hurt inside
and love that makes you mad.
Love should be a two-way street
to give and to receive
But some folks take the love they get
and then pick up and leave.
So if love makes you happy
then why are some folks sad?
And if love fills your heart with joy
then why are some folks mad?
I guess we all ask the question
what's love all about?
We're all on the inside
still trying to see out.
Why is love the thing we want
the most in our life?
When love can tear you up inside
and cut you like a knife.
I guess this notion sums it up
we take whatever's there
Cause the thought of growing old alone
is more than we can bear.
Love is a feeling
with many ways to describe
It's a feeling in our hearts and souls
and this we can't deny.
I guess we all ask the question
what's love all about?
We're all on the inside
still trying to see out.

Donna Knowles

Walking in the warmth
Going to enjoy the day
All are having fun

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Elizabeth Marquez

The Beach

There is a place I wish you could see
I'd want of course for you to see it with me
The shells come washing ashore,
They keep you coming back for more
The boats and ships strolling make you
Wonder where they might be going
You run your feet and let the sand go between
Your toes. Walking together hand in hand,
Just think how wonderful to see this place
Together, just you and I.

Gini Parke

Loveless Life

She's sad, But why?
She's about to cry.
A Beauty not beast who needs
to feed on Pleasure's Feast.
She wants to know, can I be a wife?
But how's that so with such a loveless life.
A man came by and did not say, "Hi"
Why, oh why, oh why?
Stop! Just a second she said
This is just a delusion from my head
She awoke with a sudden fright,
All alone with the darkness of the night.
A star as sharp as a knife
But still alone on her own with her
Loveless Life.

Chris Whittaker

My Perfect Place

There is a place I would like to go
Where people are real and not a show
A place where you can jump and shout
And nobody there can put you out.
A place where colors are grace
And not like here where colors mean race
A place where we all can come together
Not looking at who is greater or better

A place where the sun just shines all day
And pushes the darkness far away
A place where children can jump and play
And don't have to worry about being taken away.
A place where there is peace in the valley
And not where robbers wait for people in alleys.
A place where families can come together
for the best and better
A place where God can show His love
And shine His light from heaven above
This place that I'm talking about
This is the place where I will shout
Shout! Shout!

Annie Addison

Love and Death

There was a night not long ago
You said you loved me - loved me so.

We would kiss and you would
Hold me tight.
We'd sit and watch the stars
All night.

You said that you would
Always stay
And that our love was like
An endless day.

Then one night we had a fight.
You said our love was just not right.

I don't think I'll ever know
How I'm supposed to let you go.

You said that you would never leave.
Now I'm so confused I don't know what to believe.

Now I'm drowning in my tears
Thinking about all the years --
All the years spent with you.
I must have been such a fool.

Soon I'll be taking my last breath
Because without your love
I choose death.

Without your love life can't go on
And you'll be crying when I'm gone.

You told me you would always care
And I could feel your touch
Blowing through the air.

I must go to heaven now 'cause
You no longer care.
But I promise to watch over
You as soon as I get there.

Amie Womer

Slipping Away

Her mother is crying, she
grabs her to say my little girl
is slipping away. She pushes and
pulls to try and break free, she
cries to her mother,
"Let go of me."
You're smoking your pot, you're
Drinking your booze but in the
long run you're gonna lose, I've
raised you so well, I've heard
all your cries but I guess
I'm not ready for farewells
and good-byes. You've ruined your
life and lost all your friends
and to end this short story my
heart never mends.

Chris Whittaker

I was pretending a world
but, when I found you, I
added the sky.

Thanks for transforming
a sad child to a happy
man.

I knew you in my autumn
and there will be light in my winter.

I love your body because it
contains your heart.

I love you the way you are
more perfect maybe I won't
love you.

To be in love is to have
two souls.

Jaime Palva

For My Son, Tyler

Sweet and quiet in my arms, I hold him with such joy.
Do you know the love I feel for you, my little innocent boy?
Peace, my little heavenly gift. For you there is no fear.
You're in your loving Mama's arms and for you she's always near.
You open like a flower. You blossom more each day.
Your beauty shines to me in your own radiant way.
You inspire my every waking, my every breath I breathe,
You are the fabric of my soul, my love in you I weave.
Raise my handsome African Prince, into a man you'll have grown.
But, in your heart, with a Mama's hand,
Use the wisdom I have sown.

Christin L. Carl

You are my sun, you're my rain
You're my everything, your love's not in vain
You're my pride, you're my joy
You're my baby girl, you are my toy
You're my life, you're my love
You're my everything, you're the stars above
You're so fine, you're so sweet
like a lollipop on a trick-or-treat
You're my night, you're my day
Now you're by my side, so please say you'll stay
You're my smile, you're my tears
When I'm with you, I have no fears
Now you're mine, forever
And for eternity we'll be together

Brad Beltz

Love Makes Many Things

Love sometimes tangles up like a web.
Makes you feel live and makes you feel dead.
Makes things wander through your mind.
Makes you see better and makes you go blind.
But these are some areas we must conquer through.
Makes me very happy and will also make you.

Bryan Durnin

Spring Season

The air is cool and the sun is shining,
The grass is growing and the flowers are sprouting;
Most of all, the children are hip hopping and hop scotching.
Spring is here, they all laugh and dance.
For some a rose
For some a smile
Spring seems to come only once in a while.

John A. Pace

I like my school room
They are very nice people
It's comfortable

José Morales

My Mother

I thank God for a beautiful mother.
How she raised me my sister and brother.
I thank God how He blessed her life
For making her a good mother and wife
I thank God for how she takes others in
Not because they are cousins or kin
I thank God how she opens up her doors
And houses people in need and not on floors
Many say they love and don't show it
But my mother has love and God knows it.
I thank God for this precious time
That He gave me to spend with this
mother of mine

Annie Addison

Pages

Pages turn,
Memories burn.
Living in yesterday, that was then.
Watching words blow in the wind.
The pages burn.

Maxie A. Zenon

KIDS

No care in the world
Nor scare or fright do they have
As they grow life tall.

C. Warnock

THE POWER OF A MAN

Persuasive this man
Rugged and so controlling
Yet compassionate.

A.M. Tate

Hunters

Hunters, be careful with flintlock guns.
They are made to kill, not just for fun.
Play it safe as you roam.
A life may be saved; it may be your own.
So let us hope and be sincere.
And hope you all can get a deer this year.

Alta Miller

THE FLOWER OF PASSION

The seed gives a rose its first start,
You must nourish the rose with attention...
Water it with concern..Shine it with
Radiating patience...

It will grow up tall and firm...
As you sprinkle lots of kindness...You
Let your heart bloom into goodness...

Your goodness will come back to
You and forever will grow in your heart...
While some flowers can be different, with love
There is no diffidence...

The quality of your garden equals
The growing passion which burns in my
Heart...As a rose blossoms with a radiating
Glow, so does the burning passion glow in
One's heart...

William Yarbough

Love is a feeling
That could bring us together
Make a better world.

Deborah Garcia

Nights grow cold and dark
Their homes are dark, wet and cold
Sickness is with them

Paul Lenherd

With love on my mind
A strange feeling in my heart
And stars in my eyes

Donna Wesley

If you are a desert, I'll be the sea
Roaming your heart,
Putting a smile on your face
You, every breath I take, every step I walk.

David Oualaalou

I like the summer
Because it is nice weather
To go to the park.

Evangelina Aguilar

Spring

Today is rainy
I need my umbrella now
It is cold and wet.

Maria Vázquez

Breeze Nights

I love the night air
It makes me feel new and fine.
I'm glad it's that nice.

Migdalia Medina

Trees

Trees are big and tall
They have many colored leaves
Trees are beautiful.

Michelle A. Velez

The summer is good.
Because I like the beach too.
And playing in the sand.

Haydee Millayes

Easter's coming now
Everybody is happy
Eggs and chocolate!
Salvstia Villaseñor

HAIKU

It's a rainy day
The temperature is nice
I love the spring rain.
Elinor Sonera

When I put water
Trading beauty for my job
Beautiful flowers
Jacqueline Rivera

Spring Haiku

Today is rainy,
The weather is beautiful.
I adore the rain.
Mildred Fret

Children are my life
They are my better moments
Beautiful treasures.
Carmen Colón

Death can be so sad.
It can be beautiful too.
When you are at peace.
Ginny Ness

Down in my cabin
A silent, cold winter night
I dream of snow caps
Mirta Gonzalez

Unforgiven

I hear your silent crying,
but cannot see your tears.
I know you're still hurting
from wounds of by-gone years.
I yell, but you can't hear me
'Cause the war inside you is loud.
I reach to take your hand,
But you take it away, too proud,
I watch you as you stumble
And your shoulders droop down low.
I wonder where the laughter went
And the smiles I used to know
I chase away the emptiness
Inside my hollow mind
I try and run from memories
Of the friend I cannot find
Each day I watch your picture fade
Beneath the aging sun
We reached for unattainables
And neither party won
The darkened nights grew blacker
Still, our faces cold as ice
Our rendezvous with tender hearts
And our friendship paid the price

Hope Adkins

Love and Peace

Love and Peace to all
Laughter and joy for everyone
Peace love, sees no color

Lucy Lugo

December

December brings Christ's birthday
and He gives
love, faith, joy, hope and peace.

Lucciola González

Thank You

It was cold...
So you wrapped your arms around me.
I was alone...
So you walked beside me.
For this I thank you.
I was afraid...
So you turned on the light.
I was lost...
So you took my hand and guided me.
For this I thank you!
I was confused...
So you wrote the directions down for me.
I was bad...
But you loved me anyway.
For this I thank you
I was all of these things...
So you sent your son to die for me

Through His death, I learned in turn to love others, to show the way for the lost, to turn my light on to strangers and to walk beside my fellow man.
And for this I thank you.

Mary Lou Forrester

I once loved you
And I still do
For my heart can't take the pain
of the fantasies you give me
For it only hurts so true
So the wind of your reality goes by
And passes through.
I have to let you go and face life knowing
I'll never have you.
For when I made love to you
I thought it was only true
for I didn't do it for pleasure
I did it thinking you loved me too.
For now I have a broken heart
Knowing we're going to be apart
for you would ever know
I loved you very So!

Tesh Presto

Why do some kids cry?
They're supposed to be happy
Give love to the kids.

Ivette Roman

Happy we started to work
On a cold evening
The tree was decorated.

Aida Suarez

Rug Hooking

Does feel good to make
Hook easily in and out
It is done on time

K. Seng

Snow Skiing
Flying down the slopes,
Cool breeze against my warm face,
Feeling fancy free.

C. Warnock

The birds and the bees
Flying around in the breeze
Can see the great seas

Paul Lenherd

Happily you be
The Creator of the sea
And sky above the deep

Taalib Muhammad Ali

The Earth is our home.
Where trees and flowers have grown.
The Earth's our future.

Ginny Ness

Life's Mistakes

Today there are tears,
Tomorrow they dry.
Today there are fears,
Tomorrow they die.
Today there are dreams,
Tomorrow they will fade.
Tomorrow will erase,
The mistakes we've made.

Susan Beckett

On a Sunny Day

The sun shines brightly
It is warm and bright outside
The streets are quite hot.

Michelle A. Velez

Reach Out

I took up the phone,
And found I was alone.
I dare not to think, as I copied,
The number off the wall, to make the call
When I dialed and listened.
Your phone was ringing, yet no one answered.
As I stood there, I knew again,
I couldn't reach out and touch you at all,
So I redialed the phone to make another call.

Virginia Roupp

What a Mess!

What a mess on the desert floor!
All that scrap from all that metal from the bombs.
There is a lot of cleaning up from Desert Storm.
It surely is a mess!
And there are a lot of gas fires still burning.
Boy, there is still a lot of destruction in the desert!
It will take years to clean everything up.
It surely will be nice to see the desert floor
clean again.

Alta Miller

For All I Know

For all I know
my life depends on a book of knowledge.
As for my head
I have a hole in the top of it.
The next thing I know
I am hearing the sound of my
A B Cs
forming into
W O R D S
flowing into my head.
A few years from now
my brain will be like a computer.

Khom Tuy

Haiku

Sunny day is now
Everybody feels good
I am glad it's Hot

Maria Vázquez

Little Bird

There was a bird that could fly
Someone opened his cage and the
bird tried to fly
He walked out of the cage and
tried to fly
The people were always stepping on him
And the cats tried to eat him
His wings were hurt and he was crying
Sad little bird!
He was tired.
He couldn't walk.
He couldn't fly.
Poor little bird!
He went back to his cage and died.

Rosa Ortiz

You know how to make me smile
On rainy days, you bring out the sun.
You always go the extra mile;
As a friend, you're number one
to me.

You are there to listen and advise
To learn from you is so much fun
Your comments are gentle and wise.
As a teacher, you're number one
to me.

José Santiago

The Life of a Rose

A petal from a rose falls unto
The Earth
No one seems to notice just how
much this petal's worth
Through it's life this rose might
have made someone happy
like when a boy named John handed it
To Kathy
She kept it near to her because
it made her glad
But when it was time for it to depart
it surely made her sad
So as you see as plain as me
The rose has had no strife
Because with Kathy
it lived a happy life

Stephen Hall

Christmas

That beautiful time
When everyone is happy
With the family

Carmen Colón

Communication
Is important between two.
Without it you're one

Mirta Gonzalez

For her eyes only
He works all day long
And no vacation

Thieu Dang

Feeling deep cravings
I walk, trying to ignore
Gum and candies, my comfort.

Aida Suarez

When you are in love
Everything seems to be complete.
Love is deceiving.

Ginny Ness

Beautiful View

I have a beautiful view of the sun
when it sets in the evening from my bedroom window.
There is also a gorgeous purple lilac bush
just below my window.
Sunsets are so beautiful with all the different shades
of color: yellow; light, with a background of red;
orange; and purples lined against the blue sky.
The mountains lie back and take notice of their
dark colors that entwine with a whisper of breezes.
It brings forth the aroma of the flowering lilac
through the window.
Maybe a song or two from the peepers or whippoorwills,
and how serenity catches up with me.

Virginia Roupp

Life

Time - -
Life's most precious gift.
Love--
Life's best feeling.
Friendship--
Life's most valuable possession.
Without time,
All is lost.
Without love,
Who cares!
Without friendship,
Nothing matters.
Time, Love, Friendship --
The elements of life.

Susan Beckett

Pondering Deep thoughts
I realize the mistakes
I made in life
How to fix them I don't
know
So I will go 1 day
At a time and
take it nice
and slow fixing the mistakes
I made in the past
But I don't have
to move too fast
to know this now puts my
mind at rest all I have to
do
is my Best

Stephen Hall

Life is like the end of the world
because as soon as you come in
you leave.
From ashes to ashes and dust to dust.
That's what life is to me.

William Delgado

If I Were a Tree

If I were a tree
I could feel the wind coming.
If I were a tree
I could feel the life draining.
If I were a tree
I could feel the rain falling.
If I were a tree
I'd be alone in the woods.
If I were a tree.

William Delgado

Do Me Right

i dream of you all the time when i
wake up there is a smile on my face,
and when we get to be
together there is really nothing to say,
for easy Hello -- Kiss -- Good-bye
and it is making me feel too
You just got to tell me what is on your mind
because i just don't got enough time.
So can you just treat me right?

Michquale Jones

Sunlight in my eyes, dries my tears
scared of my thoughts, scared of my fears
I look for someone to help me through
out of my teary eyes I clearly see you.

Bryan Durnin

Time Stanzas

Derived in our minds
To look at the past
What is this thing we call time

The elder sits on a hill
Remembering when his soul was free
And he did not fear the years

Why must we know our time
Why must we see the end
We will know the answer when the end comes
But, perhaps, then it would be too late

We must make good use of the time given
For we cannot get it back
No regrets must we feel
And until we cease to be
We must look at time not as dragging on
But as available space to fill with
Joy, kindness and love.

Jesse Brackett

Thoughts

Though it's been only a short time, since
I last saw you - standing on the corner.
Not noticing me, watching you all the time,
As visions fill my eyes, and thoughts fill my mind
Will you ever be my man? Will I ever hold your hand?
How rich the dreams, the moments I hope to share
in your arms, and in your life
giving my all, and more and more
Hoping could this happen? Could it ever be true??
Then I wake . . . Only to see . . .You!

Tina Wright

CRY NO MORE

I WANT TO CRY FOR THE WICKED BUT I CAN SHED NO TEARS
I WANT TO CRY FOR THE HUNGRY AND LONELY ONCE I WAS
THERE HOW CAN I REACH OUT AND HELP YOU WHEN YOUR HAND
ISN'T THERE I CAN REMEMBER THE SHADOWS OF THE WEEPING
WILLOW THAT ALWAYS GAVE ME FEAR

Tyrone Wilson

What nice fall season
There are yellow leaves falling down
There is often rain

Truc Do

Like a Salad Bowl

We have one thing in common
it's called the human race
Yet the way we treat each other
is somewhat of a disgrace.
God made this world so we'd
have a place to live.
He also gave His son, so our
sins he could forgive.
We are all created equal, in
the eyes of the Lord, and we're
given our own identities so that
we would not be bored.
Imagine if He created us, to
look and act the same. We'd walk
around like robots and probably
go insane.
We need to think of the world
like it's one big salad bowl
for it takes a lot of ingredients
to make the salad whole.
We shouldn't separate problems
from the east and to the west
We all created the problems
but just choose not to confess.
It's easier to blame each other
and to just protect our own
And turn our backs on others
to solve problems all alone.
It makes no difference in which
part of this world that we live
Nor the size or the color of the
hand that we give.
For there are no separate races
because of religion or color of skin
There are only separate identities
in this land on which we live.
We are of separate identities
which makes us who we are
But when united all together
we can solve problems near and far.

Donna Knowles

September 1990

I am
I am me
Some see me for what they think I am.
Others see me for what they think I should be.
But that doesn't change me.
I am myself an individual,
not someone else's image of me.

Gini Parke

For My Grandmother

Where did you go
For I didn't know
Now you're so far
Up above the stars
They shine and shine so bright
I only wish you were here
in my sight.

I wish I could have
Told you how I feel
But all I have left is
The memories of the past
And only hope they last.

And now that you are gone
I will get by. I only hope
You would understand why I
Can't be there
But for now I'll be waking
Up every morning at Dawn
And know that you'll be looking
Down from above, Loving all
Your loved ones.

Tish Presto

Life is short
Time is so very precious
The quality of time is so important
The things we say and the words
We use should be treated tenderly

Anger is a bad thing, and hurt can make
Us say or do the wrong things.
To communicate and honestly talk about
Our fears and problems is vital to the
Heart and soul and mind. These things
Must be thought out carefully. There is a
Reason for everything. This must always be
considered.

Gini Parke

I Want To Love You

I want to love you the way you are
Tender, kind as a player.
Coquette as every woman
And timid and gentle as a kiss.

I want to love you for your affection
For your zeal and infantile doubts
For your vague moments of bitterness
And for your dreams unwary and subtle.

I want to love you for your whims
for all your divine anxiety
And to adore in the flash of your eyes
The juvenile candor of your virtues.

I want to love you with excess
With profound love indefinite
With all my tenacious melancholy
And every affection of my life.

Jaime Paiva

Time can never end
Mans' life is as short as dreams
Unlucky for us

Dat Do

When weather is warm
The tree has become green
The sky is bright

Qun Li

Spring

When spring is coming
The birds sing in the morning
And the grass turns green

Angel Lebran

The American Way

Walking down the street,
I see children playing,
they are dressed for warm weather,
but it's 3 below.

I hear babies crying
maybe they're wet,
I tell myself,
Not wanting to admit to myself,
that there are actually
children and adults,
Starving in the United States.

I smell death in the air,
and try not to notice
the elderly woman,
in the alley next to me,
lying very still.

When I got home,
I thought real hard
about the events of the day,
and realized that that's life
The American Way!

Joyce Barthlow

Childhood's Second Chance

I see smiles and laughter,
I see frowns and tears,
I see all the thoughts,
I see all the fears.

I see the wonder,
I see curiosity abound,
I see the satisfaction
in giving the answers that count.

I see anger that diminishes,
I see confusion that enlightens,
I see independence abounding,
I see boldness that frightens.

I see you grow
and take hold of life,
I see enthusiasm
in your every stride.

As you mature,
my little man of four,
I see what mothers,
were created for.

To smile at your laughter,
To comfort your tears,
To ponder your thoughts,
To soften your fears.

To nurture your wonder
To quench your curiosity,
To listen to your explanations,
To let your anger teach you
To help clear your confusion.

To help you be independent,
To let you know security
with your boldness,
To let you love life
and to advance,
Thank you, little man,
for my second chance!

Debroah Keefer

Spring

Of all the seasons throughout the year
Springtime is the best,
Because all the wonders of the world
Awaken from their rest.

The trees blossom, the birds come out
And fresh flowers appear,
To give us all the welcoming sign
That spring is finally here.

The bright shining sun is just a way
The earth answers its call,
To repair all the damages done
During the winter, summer and fall.

Springtime really touches us all
In a very special way,
A little walk or a family outing
Creates a fulfilling day.

Even as the sun goes down
The magic is not yet done,
Because, simply gazing at the stars
Can be so much fun.

No matter where you happen to be
In this life we hold so dear,
I promise that you'll enjoy yourself
When spring is finally here.

And, in parting, there's one more thing
I'd like to say to you,
Just wait until the first day of spring
And you'll see these words are true.

Donald Granberry

The Recruit

by Jeffrey Carter

When life slips to the level where the overwhelming necessity becomes the need to kill to live, what becomes of the original intent?

A helmet, muddy and green, rose from the foxhole as if it were a new plant breaking ground. A flash of skin followed. It was the skin of an old face, haggard and tired, and circling the eyes the face sank like the dark protective waters of a castle moat.

"I know those son'a bitches are out there," said the man as he eased back down into the hole. There, in the safe mud of the foxhole sat another soldier with a fresher face, young , his cheeks red. Wondering how to respond, this one merely stared at the other. The older man surveyed the kid and then spoke.

"Ever kill anybody?"

"No," the kid said, his voice ringing with a drilled-in inexperience.

"Do you think you can? Sooner or later you're gonna haf'ta."

"I suppose."

A muteness settled in the hole. The kid looked at his rifle and then at the darkening sky. It wore a pallor like the discolor of injury and appeared as though it were hung over the earth in great sheets.

"I'member the first time I killed a man," the old soldier said solemnly. "I saw'im by a tree, his face standing out clear on the grass. He was stalkin', an' I drew a bead on 'im. Real clear. But I didn't shoot right away. I started thinking, see. An' the whole time, I got his face layin' there on my sight like a movie. And then his face seemed to get larger an' larger til I could almost see his eye movements. I could damn near see this thoughts."

The kid listened trying to cast an air that hinted of assurance. To him, now, the old man's perception of him was vital. He sagged against the damp wall of the foxhole noncommittally as he watched the words fall with ease from the old man's face.

"So," said the kid. "What do you think he was thinking?"

The other perked and said angrily, "Why he was thinking of killin' me. What else?... At least that's what I thought at first." His eyebrows narrowed. "Then, I don't know, it seemed like I started to see more, you know? But I didn't want to, mind you. I only wanted to see the enemy. That 'id make it easier for me. Bit I started to see this person. I could see the whites of his eyes. An' all I hadda do was just pull the trigger, an' Blam! He would'a been a corpse."

"But you did kill him, right?"

"Not before something inside 'a me died."

For the briefest second the kid thought he saw the old man cry although not a cry

defined in terms of tears. It was, instead, more like a dry expressionless mask of sadness. It was a shell-pocked building in the aftermath of conflict. The kid thought he saw someone peep out from a window. He began to feel angry.

"So what you wanna lay all this on me for? You want me to be like you? You want me to die too? I didn't start this war. You did. Your people started this. Now you need my blood to pay for it."

The old man's face seemed glazed and distant. He turned to the kid slowly with a turn that seemed to take forever bringing his face from a tragicomic shadow, and said, "If you don't die, kid, you sure as hell ain't gonna make it." The voice had the hollow sound of tinderwood as it rattled around inside of a wooden box.

On the horizon, and dominating the nearly black slice of sky above the foxhole, a sudden series of bright flashes burst into a blazing light show. A thundering of artillery shock the sodden earth. The kid cowered lower covering his face. After the searching bombs stopped he looked up and collided with the old man's smile.

"I'm tellin' you," the older one said, "you're gonna haf ta die first if you wanna live."

"You're crazy," said the kid.

The old soldier laughed and took a long swallow from a scarred canteen. His bobbing adam's apple made the kid think of the ducks in the shooting gallery at a fair.

"When I pulled that trigger," said the old man, "I saw that guy's head bust open like a tomato...then it just disappeared. He never knew nuttin'. That's the same way I wanna get it." He snapped a gnarled finger, its sound dry and fleshy like a punch. Snap! "Just like that."

Continuing, he said, "Yep, for seven or eight nights, I kept killin' that guy over and over. Then one day I woke up dead an' was finally able to bury that guy." His voice was a cackle and sent a shiver through the kid's marrow.

Suddenly another series of mean yellow flashes rolled across, awakening the black sky. The ground shook, distant and deep, and an expectant spasm quivered the foxhole and missiles of packed earth and mud cascaded down its walls. The kid looked at the old man -- or wanted to when the foxhole collapsed. Yet, it wasn't the collapse felt so much by the trapped pair, as it was the sheer and absolute fury of the horrible angry shells raining down from the night sky.

Outside of the foxhole a bleak desolation lay like a mist over the battered landscape. A changing smoke, bitter and acidic, pushed its blue plumes up into the darkness. Thrown by the force of the explosion, the kid cowered lower, groping blindly out. His hands were like feelers, antennas, and he searched for security in the captive blackness of the foxhole.

He felt for the old man, but there was only the mired confusion of the twisted, still

twisting, shattered foxhole. His hand was a chameleon, a dog with a cold black nose, limping, searching for warmth. His hand was a religion. Come unto me, Oh man. His hand was covered with blood. He was alone.

He searched himself to see if the blood was his, then spun his head sharply from side to side.

"Hey, you son of a bitch, you! Where are you?"

But there was no answer to the kid's cry. Only the smoke, a blinding, choking, onrushing of grey cordite smoke that burned and singed his nostrils. Shells still fell, yet still he found no injuries upon himself. Then, and strangely so, the young soldier thought he saw from the corner of his eye, the old man in a silhouette amid the field beyond. And the old man danced a crazy jig, a toe jig through the raining chorus of shells, a weird smile drawn across this face, his aging face. Everything was odd, grotesque, and backdropped by the ominously scarred and barren treescape. And dancing - if it was the old man, blood covered, mute and black upon the flash, jigged crazily, shrieked, laughed and was gone.

The kid stared out into the moonlike decayed scene, trembling and afraid, and sought hopefully, hopelessly for some sign a dream had not occurred and that reality was somewhere close by. There was no sign to be found, and the kid lay silent watching for the dancing man. He found he was all alone.

There existed for the kid, now, only the reality of war, and in this, he did not want to die. Reality was the cold metal shell, bursting, sending white-hot fragments to seek life, to take it , to kill. Reality was the day's dead, in fields, waiting for the wagon to take them, clean. Reality was to live, to kill, to live to kill; and reality was clarity, a curtain pulled back on the night shade of a beating heart. He tried to remember, but could not. He tried to feel, but could not. He tried to feel some kind of sorrow for the old man, but could not. Nor did he feel sorrow for himself. And from the inside the flower wilted and withered like a garland locked within the pages of a bible. Trapped now in the rising stream of war all feeling had been cleanly cut away. Life was but an urgency of instinct. The kid was dead.

On the horizon line, a ragged band of soldiers crept steadily up to a wire. Watching, the dead toy soldier gripped tight his dirty weapon and secured his finger close and snug upon the trigger. It was cold against his wooden flesh. He had only to pull the trigger, and one would fall. His face, a caricature, was a thought stretched tight across a hatred. He squeezed the trigger. A man fell. A young man, an enemy. Gazing dispassionately, the dead toy soldier smiled slightly, and crawled back into the broken foxhole. He had saved another life...

My First Ride on a Harley Davidson

by Hope Rushton

It was a cool summer night when a neighbor asked if I would like a ride on his Harley. I was a bit shaky about the idea of riding on a motor type bicycle with nothing to hold me on, but when we took off, my feelings and thoughts changed instantaneously.

As we were riding down the road, I felt this sense of ease rush right through my body. It made me feel free, invincible. Like as if a cloud from the sky fell down and lifted me away from everyone and everything. I felt this boulder of burden lift right off my chest. We went to the park and sat down chatting for awhile. As we were chatting, I realized that I wasn't listening to anything he was talking about. I was just thinking about getting back on the bike and riding again.

It was on our way home when David, my neighbor, started telling me about how the Harley Davidson motorcycle was American made. Well, that's all I had to hear. It then was even more exciting because I was riding something that was not going to take jobs away from the Americans. Knowing that, it just made me feel like it was a part of me.

Not only was it exciting, but it is also economical. It cost only five dollars to fill the gas tanks. And one tank of gasoline could take the two of us quite a distance.

Little did I know that this very special ride on David's Harley would create a special bond between my fiance and I. Although I have ridden many times since, this ride will probably be the most enjoyable and treasured ride in my life.

The Fall Foliage

by IU-13's Advanced English Class at McCaskey High School

This is the fall season. The weather begins to get colder and the leaves change color and fall. The view is wonderful, a colorful picture; and the sky seems clearer. If you cruise along some streets in the suburbs, you'll see its real beauty.

I'm from Vietnam and, fortunately, am living in this state, where there are all four seasons. Nowadays it's autumn. For the first time in my life, I am seeing leaves which have changed colors. Every evening, when I go home from work on foot, I wander with slow steps...seeing the sights around me. Along the street where I live, I like a little tree...I think it's also young...with lemon yellow leaves, green leaves and reddish leaves on it. On the streets where I've had a chance to go by, I've never seen trees as beautiful as I am seeing. I'm wondering which colors they will change to next. I want to take photographs of them, but I haven't had the chance. I know that these leaves will get dry and all of them will fall, but with many colors on them. I hope to take many pictures in the next few days to sent to Vietnam where many friends there can see the fall foliage in Pennsylvania. I wish my closest friends will see them, because I don't have enough words to describe them.

Dear Sister:

It's autumn now in this country. Especially in this area where I'm living, it's starting to get cooler. Some days it's so cold we must wear more heavy clothing, because I feel chilly.

The leaves started to change color. It's so beautiful. They look so gorgeous. I wish you were here with me to enjoy them. I like to walk the streets where the trees have the color of autumn: yellow, red and brown...some even have a little dark purple.

I want to take a lot of pictures to send you. The leaves start falling one by one onto the streets and into the yards. I picked up some with different shapes and styles and with many different colors to send to you. I wish I could draw pictures of them too.

When fall comes, many trees begin to change color of their leaves. They get yellow, brown, and red, and fall from the tree. When I see my trees barely have anything on them, I feel sad.

I just moved to Lancaster. This is a "Green County" I think. We can see many old and young trees on all streets. But you cannot see many trees in downtown Philadelphia.

Everyday I walk to my factory, I watch the surroundings.

A few days ago, I was surprised to see that the green in some trees is gone. Some leaves turned red, some yellow. On other trees, leaves are brown and amber. They're beautiful. They are like pictures.

In my homeland, we have fall too. But leaves have only two colors: green and yellow. They are not wonderful.

People and nature in Lancaster give me a good feeling.

The fall season is beautiful. It is something God created; it is so pretty. The trees are vibrating with fall foliage. The leaves change color and fall, but grow again in the spring to produce flowers and fruits.

Since I arrived here, this is the first autumn season for me. It is very special to me, because I have never seen leaves turn color before. There are many colors: yellow, red, brown, and a little green. It is very beautiful. The weather is nice too. It makes me comfortable. After the sun sets, you can walk in the park with your Darling and watch the colorful leaves slowly falling. Oh, that's so wonderful. It's enough to enjoy for now.

Every year fall begins about early October. Leaves change from green to many colors such as yellow, red, brown, etc. Everyone thinks that fall is cold, but to me, it's warm and very gorgeous. I like fall in Lancaster.

It's October now. That means Fall is coming. The trees around my house begin to change color from green to yellow, amber and red. They make a colorful suit exposed under the cloudy sky.

Why does the foliage change color? Someone said, after the long days of summer, when the leaves got their green from the sunshine, they are no longer green, ready to sleep in the winter. And Fall is the season for this preparation.

Six years in the United States means six years I've seen autumn. Everywhere I go I see leaves changing color around me. It looks like a painting by a professional artist. One day they turn red; on another, they all turn yellow and amber.

Autumn or fall (you might say) for me is the most beautiful season of the year. Those who are in love like autumn because when you walk on the fallen leaves, you hear sounds made by those leaves that's just like a song.

I like autumn because it is a special occasion of the year in which I am able to see the leaves change color and it looks great.

There are four seasons in the year; spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Of the four, I like autumn the best. In autumn (fall) the leaves change into many colors: red, yellow, brown, and amber. On Sunday morning, we always go for a walk and take pictures. The leaves give us a beautiful scenery. Therefore, every week we have a date to meet each other in the park.

Leaves change color when autumn comes. We can see many colors at this season. It's beautiful. I like to take pictures at this time.

As the season changes to fall, leaves are turning to different colors. During this season, I like to go to the parks or to scenic areas to enjoy the foliage. It seems to remind me of my past memories, about which I have deep feelings. The colors mean something special to me at this time.

I think fall is one of the beautiful seasons. The leaves change from green to many colors like yellow, orange, brown, and make me feel wonderful. How nature changes. It's so colorful and when I see the leaves start to fall, somehow, I feel there will be snow soon, ready for the holiday season.

Fall has the nicest weather of the year. It's not too hot nor cold and the leaves turned red, yellow, and purple are very colorful. Very soon they'll fall to the ground and winter will be just around the corner. And that is fall.

Memories of My Hometown

by Mehari Kifla

I was born in 1967 in a small country called Eritrea located in East Africa. In Eritrea, I spent most of my life in a small city called Keren.

Keren is a very sweet small city surrounded with a big mountain where many different kinds of fruits grow. I remember when I was there my favorite kind of fruit was called zeitun in my language (I never found that fruit in the USA). Zeitun is found on big trees and it looks like an appie.

The worst thing I remember is the war between my country's freedom fighters and the regime of the Ethiopian government in Keren when I was ten years old. To tell you the truth, I almost died at that time because the terrible war continued for three days without stopping. I have a lot of things I could say about it, but my heart races now, so I must stop writing about it.

At the conclusion of my memories, I would like to say to you that whenever you get extra money try to visit Africa, especially Keren, Eritrea.

My Hometown

by Luz Ortiz

My hometown is in Puerto Rico. It is a beautiful country. When I was a child I lived in a big town in a little house with a big garden. I liked to plant flowers with my mother. I had so many animals --chickens, pigs, dogs, doves and a cat. I had three brothers. We played around the house with our dogs.

During school vacations, I liked to visit the country where my family lived. I wanted to know about life in the country where I saw rivers, tall trees and birds. My cousin washed clothes on a river stone. When she finished, we took a shower in the river. I liked to walk around searching for fruit. Sometimes I sat on a big stone and looked at the fish swimming in the water. I liked to smell the fresh air; I was very happy there.

I remember the Christmas season, especially Three Kings Day. The children received toys. All day the children played with the toys and you could see the happiness in their faces. I liked to hear traditional music, dance and eat special food. When I was in school, I had many good friends. When I was a child, I never had the opportunity to get out of my country, but it was a beautiful life for a child.

Medina

by Badre Eddine Chraibi

Fez, built in 192, is the small city where I come from. Fez, the oldest city in the country, is very spiritual because all the Moroccan scientists are from it.

I still remember the old city. The city of Fez is divided into an old and a new city. The old city hasn't changed since the old time, so all the buildings, stores, houses and streets have the old architecture which attracts millions of tourists each year. I

always had a problem if I wanted to go visit the old city called Medina because I needed a guide to show me the way. This is because I lived in the new city which is modern, and also because it has two levels, one to go in and the other to go out. Between them are thousands of streets which are narrow and look the same. I was never able to remember how to get out of there.

One strange thing about the city is when it is 100 degrees Fahrenheit in Medina, it is very cool. So I went there with some friends, most often in Ramadan, the holy month of Muslims when we have to fast. Because we couldn't eat, we tried to kill time by visiting Medina. I would go every day if I could because it was very interesting. This is the special thing I remember from my hometown and I will not forget.

Saigon in My Mind

by Tai Nguyen

Saigon was my hometown where I was born and raised. Saigon is an old town, built between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, a long time ago in the old land of Cambodia. When Saigon was occupied by the French Colonials, they built many buildings and castles. The traffic system was developed and the city was administered for a long time, until 1954 when Vietnam broke into two parts. North Vietnam followed the communist party, and South Vietnam followed the republicans.

The Vietnamese people who live there usually worked in a government office or as industry salesmen. Many, many companies in the world invested in Saigon companies such as National Company, Citroen Company, French Bank, and Chinese Bank.

Vietnam followed the French educational system and had many colleges which were built during the French Colonial time. I love my hometown and never forgot it. I have many, many good memories of high school and college. Of course, I have bad memories, but still I loved it even though it was destroyed by time. I will return in the future when the communist party stops.

My Hometown

by Mika Osuga

My hometown is the city of Narita. This city is near Tokyo, but in the countryside. The city has a famous international airport, so there are a lot of tourists. Some people call this city the "Japanese entrance."

In Narita there is a big famous temple. Although now this temple is new and beautiful, when I was a kid, it was very old, like a ghost house. I was very afraid and I did not want to go there. Many people come to this temple to worship for the new year in December and January, so it's very crowded at this season. I've never been to this temple when it is crowded.

When I was a kid, there were many fields and forests. One of the forests was my favorite playground. There was a long swing. My father, sister and I played there every day because nobody knew about it.

My Hometown

by Hoan Vu

I was born in a small village in the mid-highlands of North Vietnam. I lived in a house with my parents, brothers and sisters. It was a large old house with a red roof and was surrounded by green bamboo.

I spent all my childhood in this village. When I was ten years old, I always got up early to see the farm workers going to the green rice fields. I loved the farm workers. The life of a farmer in my country was very difficult even though they worked very hard. In the morning, I could see the sunrise, the bright red sun and the green rice fields made a wonderful picture.

In the summer, at noon, my friends and I liked to swim in the stream. We enjoyed the cool green water. After that, I liked to sit under the shadow of the bamboo trees, listen to the buzzing of the bamboo, and watch the waving of the rice fields when the light wind blew. On the night of the full moon, I would go with my brother and watch the girls and boys of the village greeting each other. It was my childhood and I can never find it again.

My Hometown

by Maria Carrasco

I was born in a little country at the bottom of the mountains in La Paz, Bolivia. It's located between two rivers. In my family there were six children, three brothers and three sisters.

My hometown was beautiful. I say "was" because now it is not. Although, at that time, my town didn't have electricity, we used candles and kerosene lamps. We used to carry water from the river in pans and baskets and usually I put them over my head. I tell my parents the reason that I'm short is because I carried water on my head.

I went to school in my hometown until the sixth grade and then I stopped because we didn't have high school. Later, I went to Santa Cruz for my high school. When I was in the fifth grade, I remember Independence Day in my country, August 6th. In school we prepared a program for the parents and authorities. One of the dramas represented the ten departments of my country and I represented my whole country. We called it "Madre Patria" and my classmates gathered around me. I was dressed with a big flag and the other girls each wore the typical dress of each department. It was nice and I liked it.

Another memory from my childhood has to do with final exams. We used to have oral exams with teachers and parents, and we had to show them our notebooks and our projects. My father was a farmer and all of us helped him. My mom had a bakery and we helped her too.

At my house we had a garden and citrus trees. I remember that every afternoon we picked oranges and mandarins to eat after our games. When there was a full moon, we used to play in front of my house because there was a soccer field and all the streets had grass so it looked like a green rug.

That was the most beautiful my hometown ever was. Now, all the streets are destroyed because foreigners came with their trucks and they didn't take care. Now you have some idea how my childhood was.

My Hometown

by Yoko Doi

My hometown is Nagoya city in Japan. Someone named it the "white city" because there aren't many trees in the downtown. There is a beautiful Nagoya Castle with two golden dolphins on the roof. I have visited there three times with my American friends. We could have had a fine view from the observation deck except that it was cloudy and rainy. I remember the moldy smell during the rainy season.

When I was a young girl, I went to Atsuta shrine every week. I practiced classical ballet in a small class near Atsuta shrine. In the fall, I collected many leaves. There were big trees everywhere. I still like Atsuta shrine except during the holidays. Many people visit there during the holidays, and I don't like crowded places. It was a very quiet and mysterious place on ordinary days. In particular, many people used to go there at the New Year. They usually put on a kimono during that season.

When we built our house we were very surprised. We heard a lot of croaking frogs in the morning. Sometimes we couldn't sleep well at night in the summer. But we can't hear them now because the pond opposite has become land. I feel lonely.

My Hometown

by Nelly Icazbalceta

I spent my childhood in Mexico. The name of my hometown is Saltillo, Coah. It is smaller now than when I was a little girl. I remember when all my friends and neighbors met in the evening to play in the streets. We used to run and we fell down a lot.

I loved the time when I went to kindergarten. I'll never forget when a little boy wanted to give me a kiss and I was very scared and I ran into the restroom. Another thing that I'll never forget is my girlfriends. I had a beautiful time with them. There was a park near my house and we used to run around the fountain and play with our Barbies. We loved to create plays, too.

One thing that I love to do is sing so, when I was a child, I used to go to a little church that we had in my hometown to play the guitar and sing religious songs. This place has changed a lot, but I cannot forget all the details. It was very peaceful; it had a lot of land where we used to play and I remember when we had the fair once a year in the land next to the church. Now, I feel very happy when I see the new generation playing and enjoying their hometown like we did.

My Hometown

by Noriko Konno

My hometown was in the country until ten years ago. The only transportation was a bus and it took about twenty minutes to go to the city. My hometown was in the middle of the mountain and also there were mountains in front of my home. There was lots of nature in my hometown.

I loved to hike on the mountain. In the spring, I went to the mountain to get wild flowers and wild vegetables with my mother. In the summer, we went to the mountain just to get fresh, cool air. In the fall, the changing leaves were so beautiful. Although we could see the beautiful mountain from my house, it was more fun to walk in the woods. In the winter, we went to the mountain to get pine cones, nuts, red nuts, etc., to make Christmas decorations.

Everyday, I took a walk with my dogs. There were many rice fields around my home and also it was fun to walk around the field. I loved to pick pretty flowers on my way. I loved nature and I loved my hometown.

When I was about ten years old, the nature began to be destroyed. Many trees were cut down and the valleys were filled in. We couldn't get anything from the mountain any more. It was so sad.

Today, there is a train station in my town and there are lots of houses and a big road where our hiking place used to be. The population is increasing. I still like my hometown, but not like before.

I saw a monkey several times in the town. It means there is no longer a lot of nature. Before the nature was destroyed, I never saw monkeys in the town. There are no places for wild animals any more and they come to town to look for their food. So, I can't blame the monkey if he steals apples from our apple tree (it has happened).

Anyway, I have many good memories of my hometown and these are my treasures.

Something About Russia

by Olga Botyazova

I want to tell you about my country. It was one of the biggest countries in the world. I mean the Soviet Union. There were fifteen republics in my country, but now this country has become smaller because almost all of these republics have become independent states.

I lived in Russia. It is the biggest republic. It is located in two parts of the world: Europe and Asia. Russia is a very rich country. There are many forests and fields, rivers and lakes. It is a very beautiful country, but it is very unhappy too because about seventy years ago the Socialist Revolution took place. The Communist Party came to power and a lot of people like the beautiful scientists, artists, commanders and others were driven away to the camps. There were many camps in difficult access areas and most people died there.

On August 21, 1991, the Democratic Party came to power. It is so difficult to rearrange this big country. I think it will take a long time for people to begin to live better and happier lives.

Christmas Customs in My Country

by Teresa Millan

In my country Christmas is a very happy season. People prepare wonderful foods and drinks. In Puerto Rico, we take a pig and cook it outside the house with coal. We also make a drink that is delicious made with coconut, milk, cinnamon and rum. At night, people get together and sing, dance and drink. Some people have dinner first with their family and later on they go out to party. To me, Christmas is very important because I stay with my children at home and open the Christmas presents.

My Hometown

by Miki Sawai

I was brought up in the countryside. My hometown, Yamatokoriyama, is famous for the ruin of the castle, old temples and cultivated goldfish, so around my house there were a lot of ponds for goldfish. When I was a school child, my friends and I always tried to catch the goldfish with our hands on the way home from school. Once, I failed to catch a fish, lost my balance and fell in a pond. I went home totally wet and was scolded so much by my mother.

My mother grew vegetables such as corn and sweet potatoes. I had a daily routine of watering plants in her garden. Every autumn, Mother and I dug out potatoes. It was a happy job for me.

Every April, there was the castle festival in my town. We strung large Japanese beads around the wall of the ruins. If you touched all of the beads, they said that happiness came to you. And there were a lot of cherry trees in the ruins, My family had a small party under one of these cherry trees, and we enjoyed seeing the beautiful cherry blossoms. I also enjoyed dipping up fish at a night stall.

Cuba, the Old Country

by Dania B. Ojeda

Cuba is a large island located south of the Florida peninsula, approximately ninety miles from the Florida shore. Cuba has six provinces: Pinal del Rio, La Havana, Matanzas, Santa Clara, Camoguey and Oriente. Right below you will find a smaller island called Isla de Pinos which is also part of the island.

In the old days, Cuba's economy depended on sugar cane, tobacco and tourism. Today Cuba is under a communist regime that controls all incoming resources, all businesses and all Cuban lives over all.

My dream is someday to be able to go back and see Cuba's shore, countryside and the family that I left behind twenty-two years ago.

My Country, Mexico

by Ricardo Hernández-Soto

México is bordered on the north by the United States, on the south by Guatemala and Belice, by the Gulf of México and the Atlantic Ocean on the east and by the Pacific Ocean on the west. México was inhabited by tribes such as the Mayas and the Aztecs. México was a rich country when in 1517 Francisco Hernández de Cordoba effected the first Spaniard expedition. In 1519, Hernán Cortéz came with a total of 500 men, 11 ships, 16 horses and 10 cannons. In 1810, México got its freedom from Spain and twelve years later it became a republic.

Actually, México has the biggest city in the world with up to fifteen million people living in it.

My Hometown

by Yuko Takahashi

My hometown, Yamagata, is located northwest of Tokyo. It takes fifty minutes by airplane. My house is near the downtown in Yamagata, so it is very convenient to go everywhere.

When I was a child, my mother woke me up every morning. I went to school with neighboring children. I could see my school from my house, so I always heard cheerful voices in the morning and after school until around three o'clock.

When we took a ten minute recess, we went out to the playground. We sometimes smelled food such as beef, spaghetti, macaroni, chicken, gratin, and fried rice because there was a school kitchen next to our playground. It made us hungry.

In the winter, the snowplow came to clear the road of snow. When it passed my house, I always woke up around six o'clock. I sometimes helped my parents to sweep out snow from my garden and outside the gate before I went to school. It was a lot of snow, so we made snowmen and snowballs. We also made some snow houses and played inside them. We often had a game of snowballs.

I could see beautiful mountains from the window of my room because there weren't high buildings. They were very beautiful at the change of seasons. I had a lot of memories in Yamagata. There were many nice people who lived near my house.

My City

by Liliana A. Urueta

I come from Barrauquillo, Colombia. Today I want to talk about my city. Barrauquillo is located in northern Colombia, between the Pacific and Atlantic coast. The population is six or seven million people. Most of the year it's very hot, except in December, when there are one or two weeks of cool air.

There are lots of traditions in Barrauquilla. One of them is the Carnival Feast. It is celebrated annually. It is one of the best carnivals, after Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

Another tradition is Holy Week. The people eat desserts but they do not eat meat, only fish. Barrauquillo is a very cheerful place. It makes me happy because I never get bored. I miss my city because everything is different from the way it is here. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about my city.

My Hometown

by Toshi Doi

My hometown is Nagoya city in Japan. Nagoya lies almost midway between Tokyo and Osaka, and has a population of 2,500,000. Nagoya is a beautiful city which stands among splendid surroundings. But, recently, I have begun to worry about my hometown because the natural environment of the area is being destroyed by development projects. Sometimes the development projects also destroy historical sites.

I love to go sight-seeing at the traditional old Japanese house, the historic museum in Nagoya. I think it is important to preserve sites of historical value and to protect nature. Companies should discuss these matters in a constructive manner.

However, I love my hometown. I live in Midori-ku and my brother and sister are working in my dental office. Many of my friends live around my office.

My Hometown

by Tung Cao

When we talk about our hometowns it makes me remember my country where I lived and grew. When I lived in my country, life was so difficult. Still, I was a lucky man because I enjoyed my free time in my hometown. It was a small town built near a city, but it is not noisy like other cities. It is much calmer and convenient. In the distance I could see farms, gardens planted with bright flowers and spruce trees. The landscape there is romantic. I felt glad at the time that I had my hometown, especially when the sunlight formed radiant yellow beams through the warm air.

My Hometown

by Yuka Inaba

I grew up in a small town. It isn't much different from how it used to be. The only change I can see is that is has become more convenient than before. But this change doesn't spoil my town's attractiveness.

My hometown was a little populated because there were a lot of housing complexes. I also lived in a housing complex. But my town was very quiet and nice. Though there were neither rivers nor beaches, we had some nice parks to play in. In the spring, we enjoyed beautiful cherry blossoms and in the fall, we enjoyed beautiful red and yellow leaves.

We had a long beautiful path to the station. Cars and motor bicycles were not

allowed to go through that path. In my town, there were no factories and firms except for the small market, so it was not noisy and the air was very clean.

The elementary school and the kindergarten were very near my house. It took me about ten minutes to get there. I often rambled on the way home, because the path to my house was very nice. Though I said my town was populated, there was still a lot of space to play in. In the winter, I often went to fly a kite.

My family likes our town. I also think my town is very nice. It seems to be impossible for me to find nicer places than my town. Most people think their hometown is best. So other people who don't live in my town don't think my town is the best. But, for me, it's the best place to live.

My Hometown

by Yuka Mitarai

I came from Tokyo which is the biggest city in Japan. I liked Hall and Oates but I never heard their songs recently in Japan. I occasionally heard it on the radio and remember my dear hometown whenever I hear their songs. I heard American music every day while I was in junior high school They were my favorite songs. I liked to listen to music and to watch music TV. My favorite music program was broadcast at midnight. I never missed it and I never forgot to videotape it every time. That program was broadcast once a week. I didn't like to miss it.

I wonder why I was so absorbed with it. I don't have the energy now. So, I remember my young days when I hear the Hall and Oates.

My Dream House

by Yoko Doi

I would like to live in a wooden, seaside house. There are five bedrooms, two superb kitchens, two bathrooms (one of them is a Japanese bath), a large living room, and a dining room. I also have a gym and an inside pool. My husband and daughter need to exercise every day. My husband and son will go fishing every day in our boat. We can eat real fresh fish every day. There is a huge garden in the back with many trees and flowers. I will cook delicious meals every day. I need many sharp knives. American knives aren't sharp, are they? I like white lace curtains. I'll decorate the windows with them. This is my dream house.

Editor's Note: The following writing was produced by an intermediate ESL class in response to these questions, "If you could speak directly to the new United States President, what questions would you ask Mr. Clinton and what advice would you give him to help him in his new job?"

Mr. Clinton is the new President of the United States. If I could speak directly to him, I would ask him some of my questions about things in and out of the U.S.:

1. Can you lower the taxes?
2. Can you protect the rights of U.S. citizens in and out of the country?
3. Can you solve many problems in the U.S. society such as crime, drugs, the economy, education, racism, etc.?
4. Why is the war happening with Iraq again?
5. How long will you continue the embargo against Vietnam?
6. Can you make a friendship with all countries of the world?
7. Can you help the jobless in the United States?

Dang Nguyen

Mr. President, Bill Clinton:

I have many questions about your new government. First, why are there so many temporary employment agencies? Employers pay too much money to search for employees and now many industries and companies prefer agencies to regular people. This is because agencies pay people as temporary workers and companies don't have to pay insurance. I think this is not fair.

Also, why is the United States giving opportunities to Cuban politicians and not other countries? That is not equal treatment.

Why doesn't the government give more help to students? Young people don't have opportunities to study at the universities. In the past, the government has interrupted the help. Why don't they cut help for nuclear projects and pay more attention to this problem? Thank you.

Patricia Calvo

If I could speak directly to the new United States President, my questions would be the following:

1. How will you control the economy inside the country?
2. What about the high cost of medicine, doctor's care, and surgery? Will it always be a great business?
3. What about young people with their problems of education, family, jobs, etc.? I think young people are the foundation of a country. It's necessary that young people know their way, their goal, and be sure of themselves. They need more sports, educational programs on TV, fewer problems at home, and less violence.
4. What will be your politics with the countries around the world? You must think that those countries are developing and they need money to be successful in this area. How will you give money to those countries?

Remember, that they have problems today because in the past they received money from the United States and 80% of it went into the pockets of the government. It's necessary to require honesty.

Aristides Méndez

The United States has a lot of problems. How will you find a solution to these problems? How will you make a relationship with Japan? What style of clothes do you like? What is your favorite food?

Kumiko Takahashi

If I could speak directly to the new United States President, the questions that I would ask Mr. Clinton are:

1. Will you lower the taxes in this country?
2. How long can you continue immigration?
3. When will the United States establish international relations with Vietnam and abolish the embargo completely?

I would give him advice to help him in his new job. In my opinion, I think you should lower taxes at many companies and fix social problems.

Thuy Pham

Will you, Mr. Clinton, care about foreign policy? I heard many people saying that the American government shouldn't interfere in other countries' problems and that the United States can't always be the police officer of the world. Do you agree with that opinion, Mr. Clinton? My advice for you, Mr. Clinton, would be just to keep the promises you gave the people during your campaign.

Aneta Nikulcza

If I could speak directly to President Clinton, I would have questions:

1. How will you plan your new job?
2. Do you think taxes must be increased or decreased?
3. I hope you can make the economy better and have less unemployment because there are too many people unemployed now.

Cuong Tran

Mr. Clinton, what will you do about fixing problems in the Middle East? Also, you know more about education than most people and you understand that school is a basic need in society. If students have problems and nobody notices, we will have many problems in society and you know that if teachers have problems too, they can't teach. Little by little, students will quit school. In the future we will have many people who can't read and write and there will be a big problem. You should worry first about school and second about the teachers and students.

Shohreh Arbabian

I think this job is really hard. You have to be careful about your health. It's not just your body. You have to keep your relationships in condition, especially with your assistants. Don't worry much about people's opinions. You might not have experience, but you were chosen. You have to believe in yourself.

Reiko Miyata

Why does the United States have problems with jobs and the economy? Can you fix these problems? How long do you think it will take?

Popi Mylonas

The United States has many problems. I think the most serious problem is the economic condition. Many people have lost their work and become homeless. If I have an opportunity to speak directly to the new president, I would ask him how important the economic problem is for him and how he would fix it.

I think the United States spends a lot of money for other countries every year. I understand that other countries have serious problems and they need help by the great economic power. Actually, the United States helps them, but they sometimes neglect the economic problems in their country. I think the new President should try more carefully to improve the problem.

Chikami Ushijima

If I had the honor of speaking directly to the new United States President, I would ask him some questions:

1. What do you think about the war?
2. What do you think about Iraq and what would you do to solve Iraq and Somalia's problems?
3. What do you think about the size of the military? Do you think it is necessary or not?
4. What would you do to change the current economic situation in the United States?

Dong Nguyen

If Iraq doesn't follow your advice, does America have to make war against Iraq again? Certainly, Mr. Saddam Hussein killed many people but, if you think that you have to solve the problem between Iraq and Kuwait by use of armed forces, I think as a result, you will kill civilian people who have nothing to do with the war.

I think we must peacefully settle international conflicts. Do you have any other ideas? Some American people think that America doesn't want to be the international police any more. Do you agree with this, or do you have to help other countries more?

Yuko Yonemitsu

Why did you want to be president? What do you think about government? Could you improve the economic conditions of America?

Hiromi Hiraoka

If I could speak directly to the United States president, I would ask him about taxes, jobs, loans, the recession, crime, drugs and people. Why do some companies outside of the United States pollute?

Vinh Huynh

What do you think about exports and imports between Japan and America? What will you do to deal with the destitute? What do you think about Japanese-American relations and the United States - Japan Security Treaty? I think the American President is at the top of the whole world so, you must think about other countries.

Masayo Okamoto

Editor's Note: GED/Basics Instructor, Ellen Kirkner, from Chambersburg, PA asked her SPOC (Single Point of Contact) students to read a series of articles published in the New York Times, entitled "Children of the Shadows." This series examined the lives of ten young people coping with their impoverished lives in different American cities. It detailed the challenges they have been forced to face, including drugs, violence, and parental indifference. When they finished reading the articles they were asked to answer the question, "Why do you think teenagers have such a hard time in American cities today? Why are they faced with so many problems?" The following are the answers two of her students wrote:

Why Do Teenagers Have Such a Hard Life in American Cities Today?

by Marcy Smith

I have explained my answer to this question in the two areas: crime and education.

Crime

Children learn, in part, by watching the actions of others. As a result, children may behave in ways the people around them behave. I believe that parents need to be good role models for their children. Some parents are too hard on their children when punishing them. For instance, if a parent abuses a child in violent ways, then the child may think it's okay to do such things to other people. The parents' abuse may encourage the child to act out and commit violent crimes when they get older. This may occur because parents are, in effect, teaching their child that violent behavior is normal.

Drug addiction can lead individuals to committing crimes such as robbery. When an addict has no money and no drugs they may get desperate enough to steal money from parents, relatives, friends or even people they don't know. Parents need to make their children understand the dangers and effects of drugs.

I believe that a family needs to interact and do things together as a family. Family interaction will show a child love, compa.ionship and bonding. In building strong family bonds the child will learn respect, love, and especially how to treat people in that manner. I also believe parents need to be more responsible with their children. Parents need to realize how their behavior effects their children. For example, if a parent watches a violent horror movie in front of their children they should be aware of how it will effect their child's mind.

Education

The most important problem that students need to recognize is that dropping out of school can make life more difficult. Will drop-outs find a well paying suitable job to support themselves without a high school diploma? What will become of them if no employer will hire them? How will they pay their bills with no income? Where will they live? These are the kinds of questions that need to be plastered on poster boards and hung in school hallways! Questions like these are what parents and teachers need to ask students.

In my opinion students in schools today don't receive the kind of attention that they really need from their teachers; some students need more of a one-on-one teaching relationship. Some students become discouraged and give up. They may feel inferior in comparison to some of the more advanced students, because they don't understand what is being taught. I know because this is how I felt in school. Teachers don't always react to students in the manner that they should.

When I was in school I was looked down upon by students and teachers because of my inability to understand my work. I realize now I should not have cared if people made fun of me because, "No Question is Stupid!" Even if you think it is, you should ask anyway. There is always a sensible answer. It's good to ask questions, because it builds your knowledge.

The influential behavior of the wrong type of friends can have a negative effect on students. When students associate with individuals that behave negatively they may start to develop negative behavioral patterns, such as skipping school, smoking, dealing drugs or drinking.

When this negative behavior occurs parents need to step in and discipline their child. They must use the type of discipline that doesn't involve any kind of abuse. Parents should take something from them that the child absolutely loves, like revoke their privileges.

When a child begins associating with "the wrong crowd" it may indicate that he or she needs more family activity in his life. Family activities give students a positive boost. For example, if parents would sit down with their child and discuss their

homework, it would help their child immensely.

When a family does activities together it draws the family closer together. Family bonds encourage people to be more open and discuss their problems with one another. When a family has no communication, no family activities, and no closeness, the child can feel lonely.

Parents need to consider the kind of life they want their children to have. In order for kids to care, their parents need to care too!

Why Teenagers Have a Hard Time Surviving in American Cities

by Jenniffer Shaffer

I think the main reason so many young people are struggling to survive today is the lack of parental guidance. So many parents don't understand that they are like a mirror to their children. Everything they do reflects back upon their children. They say they want their children to grow up and be somebody and to make something out of their lives. How can they do that, if all the children ever see their parents doing is drinking, taking drugs, or leaving their children home alone and unattended.

Children, young and old, need positive role models. They need people to have a positive effect on their lives. They need someone to be there for them when they are being pressured, feeling lonely, or just need someone with whom they can talk. The world is a very tough place for a child to grow up.

Another reason that we are losing so many children to drugs and violence is the need for more education. We need more programs for young people aimed at teaching the effects of drugs and alcohol. There is also a need for more programs so that children have someplace to go while their parents are working. No child should have to be out on the streets dodging bullets or home alone and frightened. Someone needs to be teaching children about protecting themselves against AIDS and other diseases. A lot of parents don't bother to talk about AIDS until it is too late. Education needs to start early in a child's life so they will be prepared for life's problems when they are confronted with them.

Someone needs to let the children know that dropping out of school is not going to get them anywhere in life. If they want to accomplish something in life and get a good paying, honest job, they must complete their high school education.

People often speak of the way things should be. No child should go to bed hungry, no child should be beaten, no child should have his life taken away by gang violence, no child should have to sleep out in the snow or rain. It's time we take the word "should" out of those statements, and put the word "will" in its place. If we want things to change in this country, then we have to be the people to change the problems. Our children are our future. It's our responsibility to protect them. Without our children, we have no future.

Thanksgiving Thoughts

Thanks Lord

by Maria Melendez

Oh Lord! I know I don't deserve to call You Father, but I am here because I need to thank You for the life and everything You give us every new day. Forgive me Lord if sometimes I don't remember that everything I have comes from all that love You have for me. I know that when I need You I call you asking for the help I need, but I never know. When I don't have want I want, I get angry. Now, I ask You, "Would you forgive me, Oh God of Love?" I need to thank You for the health of people I love. Thanks for my entire family. I thank You for the light that You bring us with that beautiful sun, for the breeze we breathe, for the water we drink, for the food we eat. Thanks for letting me be here today with my friends. Thank You for letting me wake up every morning full of new hopes and with the promise that You will be with us everywhere, anytime. Thanks God for letting me thank You.

Special Thanks

by Elizabeth Marquez

I am very grateful for having been born in this world because if I wouldn't have been born, I wouldn't have two handsome boys, whom I treasure so much. Their birth is the best thing that happened to me. My oldest is almost three years old. I enrolled him in a program called Even Start.

This program offers a valuable assistance in education for the children and for the parents. It also offers day care for younger children, such as my youngest son who is one year old. Even Start is good for my children and me because it is an excellent way to prepare for life. It provides the kids with an opportunity to share and be around other people, ESL for people who don't speak English and also GED classes to assist adults in getting a better education, which will lead us to a bright future.

I'm grateful that Even Start has given me a second chance to reach my goals in life.

My Thanks to God

by Carmen Otero

I am thankful for all God has given me. Let me tell you about my blessing. I have a big family including four children. Their names are Samuel, Manuel, Melissa and Jasmine. I thank God for their health. I also have food and shelter for my family and a safe, quiet place for the children to play. Samuel, my husband, is a good man who understands my feelings and where I am coming from. He uses his time to listen to me. My mother is also dear to my heart because she always stands by me and gives me advice about what I have to do.

I am studying for my GED for a better future. My teachers, Ginny and Carolyn,

help me a lot when I have problems. I believe we should thank God every day, not just at Thanksgiving. Every new day God brings us comes full of new promise and new hope. I thank God for good and bad things. The good things help us to live each day. The bad things give us experiences to grow better. Let's all thank God for life, for the things we have, for daily good or bad, no matter what. Let's thank God for his grace.

Thanksgiving

by Socorro Bonilla

Thank you Lord because in your infinite mercy you have given us a special day to recognize your generosity, and your infinite love for us. I will always thank You for the blessings You give us. Thank you, God, for my family and for filling my heart with love to share with them. Thank you, Lord, for all the hard times, because those trials are the base of our spiritual growth. Thank you, God, because without a nest to warm my cold body, I'd be like a flower without a smell. Thank you, Lord, for your infinite mercy.

Thankful at Thanksgiving

Jacquelina M. Rivera

Thanksgiving day is a beautiful holiday. Even though we should be thankful everyday, a lot of people are not thankful to God. When I was small my parents did not show me that we should thank God for everything. Now that I have two children and more knowledge, I want them to learn more about God and be thankful.

My children are very important in my life. Sometimes when I feel sad and lonely, they bring me happiness in one way or another. Now I am thankful to God everyday because, thanks to God, I have my children and everything that I have.

My goal is to learn English, get my GED, and get myself a good job. Sometimes I might seem like a negative person but, with the help of close friends, I know I can make it. And always with the love and blessing of God. No matter what, I say, we should always be thankful to God.

Being Thankful

by Maria Rosario

I'm thankful to God for so many things, but especially for the family I have. We do not celebrate Thanksgiving but we do believe that we have to be thankful to God every single day of our life.

When we get up in the morning, when we walk on the road, when we sit down to eat, when we feel happy or sad, when we feel healthy or sick, and when we go to bed, we are so thankful to God. In other words, we are thankful to God each minute of our life, for each minute is a precious moment and a new experience.

Every time I see a smile on one of my kid's faces, I'm thankful to God. For

the blessing of being a mother of six, sharing and caring for them, I'm thankful to God. When I go to bed and for the day that has passed, I'm thankful to God. No matter how tired I feel, I always receive the love and understanding of a good husband. For this and for all I'm thankful.

If I have a bad day I'm thankful to God because that teaches me and helps me do better the next day. I'm thankful to God for everything, for my loved ones, for my friends, for the young and old, for the choices of everyone and for every helping hand. No matter how much we are thankful to God, I know we will never be Thankful Enough.

I Am Thankful For...

by Carmen Rosa

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, I reflect on all the things I am grateful for. I am most grateful for my daughter. She is the most important thing in my life. I thank God for giving her a chance to live. When she was born, she was thirteen weeks early and she only weighed two pounds. I am really thankful for her.

I am also thankful for parents and siblings. They are all special to me and I wouldn't change anything about them. I am really thankful for my mother who is the main person in my life. She is the one I look up to because of her beauty and caring. She is a special part of me and I thank God for her.

I think we should all be thankful for a lot of the things in life from food and jobs to transportation and finances. But most of all, we should always thank God for everything we do, for He is the Leader and should always be first.

Thanksgiving

by Carmen Colón

Thanksgiving has been a tradition for years, particularly in my family. We all meet together in one of our houses and we thank God before we eat. We thank God every day, not just on Thanksgiving. We thank Him for everything including the food, then start the party. We dance, some people play an instrument; we have fun. This is the way we celebrate Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving Thoughts

by Lucy Lugo

As the holiday season approaches, I begin to feel very close to all the loved ones in my life whom I'm so grateful for. I thank God for all the wonderful things He's given me, such as my children. They play a very important role in my life, making any rainy day one full of sunshine. It comes with warmth from my heart to say thank You, God for my fiance, for he is a great lump of love. He's very understanding and is always willing to be there for me when I need him the most. I'm very thankful and grateful for

my parents who through thick and thin have stuck together to always give us a home and to put food on the table. I ask God at the end of every year to give more love and life to everyone so close to my heart. And I thank God by celebrating with my family. Then we light a white candle in His name as a reminder to all of us of all that God has done.

I Am Thankful

by Aida Suárez

I am thankful for life because life is a precious gift from God. He created me as a human being, gave me two eyes so I could see the marvelous things He gave me. I am thankful because He gave all the parts of the body I need to see, feel, touch and walk. Also, a mind to think better each day. I am thankful for my health because without it I wouldn't have had three lovely healthy children. I thank God for giving me the opportunity to raise my children with love and care in this confused world. I thank God because without the children, I wouldn't have my own family.

Thank you, Lord, because you are helping me more and more every day in the role of a mother. Thank you, Lord, for helping me do better each day. That is a way for showing me the great love you have for all of us. Many times we don't deserve or accept the love God gives us so we can share and become a useful person to others. I am thankful because we can experience new ideas and ways of communicating with others as the days go by. This helps me find friends who can be trusted and friendship offers a better way of life.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

by Angie Meléndez

Thank you, God, for life because my life is like a prairie where I can bloom just the way I want. I thank you, God, for the health of my family, for every new day You bring us, for the light of the sun, for the breeze we can breathe. I thank you for everything good or bad because with the things that are not too good we can learn and live better the next day. Thanks for everything, God.

Date For the Rest of Our Lives

by Sharon Rodríguez

Dedicated to all the children whose sounds of life were taken away by "Drugs."

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in regard to the children. You are a threat to them and their families. You come to our children and offer yourself for free. But you have a catch; you never go away unless you can take them with you! You change them from sweet innocent children to someone who preys on the street. You also make promises you know you can't keep, like saying you can offer them a world of their own. The love we

give our children you try to take and put in your ruthless soul.

We, as mothers, are the ones who felt their precious bodies move within our womb, and we gave them their lives. We hold these lives dear to our own, so what gives you the right to try and take them away? For many grieving mothers you have succeeded in taking their child away. Their sounds of life never to be heard again; their laughter turned into haunting memories all because you so heartlessly gave so much of yourself until their final heartbeat.

From me and my children, you are going to have a fight. My children may only be in grade school and may not have any knowledge of who you are, but I will beat you to them and give them the knowledge to beat you too! Because I know my children need a lot of hugs and not drugs.

Crimes That Don't Pay

by Karen McClintok

First of all, I was out having fun. All of a sudden, I ran into someone I thought was a friend! But, in reality, they were helping my life end. My friend, who we'll call Mark, turned me on to drugs.

We were on our way to get some cocaine. Before we knew it, the police pulled us over. They checked the car and found evidence to take us all to jail.

As I waited to see the judge, they took my picture and fingerprinted me. They also took information on me. About three hours later, I was seen in front of the judge. He set bail for $5000 straight. The guard took me back over to the bull pen for holding. I was then taken to prison until my bond was paid or I appeared in front of the judge for arraignment. As I was giving information to the guy at the front desk, the guards were making rude comments to me. They once again took my picture. A nurse came and wanted to know if I had any illnesses or a history of any diseases. I had none! Another guard escorted me to my housing area, strip searched me and made me shower with this bug shampoo. How humiliated I was! The guard was standing there watching my every move. It was very degrading, beyond words. After I was finished showering, she gave me two sets of clothing. This is what I was expected to wear during my stay at the prison. She then escorted me to my living quarters.

I was really scared are cried a lot at first. All I wanted was to be home. The prison has many classes you could do to keep yourself busy and learn. The ladies here at the prison are nice; they were also helpful. Prison is a very lonely place and at times it does get scary. You never know when or what will happen next. Girls come and go. You make friends and they only end up leaving. I'm happy for them, but sometimes it feels wrong. I mean, they do a much more dangerous crime than you, and they're scot free while you sit and wait to see a judge. Sometimes it's not fair! But, if you don't want to feel lonely, scared and have no freedom, don't do a crime, because it doesn't pay.

My Story

by Jacob Santiago

My name is Jacob Santiago and I entered Manos September 25, 1992. I came in with a very messed up attitude. I did not want to do anything in Manos for about five months and I wanted to do four and a half months, but I did not do anything. I had no good communication with my mother or brother. I don't talk to my father because he's been in jail half of my life and when he wasn't in jail we did not get along. He physically harmed and abused me.

My mom was in rehab also for about one year four years ago in Philadelphia. It was called Soldiers of the Lord. Before, she and my father used a lot of drugs so my mom decided to do the right thing and my father decided to do the wrong thing. I said all of this stuff about how I'm never going to smoke weed or sniff cocaine. Then I ended up with drinking beer with my cousin. I thought I grew up a little and started smoking weed, then cocaine. Remember, I said to my mom I did not want to do any drugs. I started selling with my friends and I could have sworn I was big shit! But, really I wasn't. I was killing people, even little kids I sold to just for money or to be down with the fellas. When I got caught I was in detention for a while. I thought I was saving people's lives because they looked dead and when they would use it they had more pep. Slowly but surely Manos helped me change. I have a new self and I changed my attitude. I stopped using and selling, and I'm proud of myself and my mother because we both changed. We're closer together and I'm proud of what Manos did for me.

Thoughts

by Dennis Spencer

I think it is very possible to be both poor and happy at the same time. I think that this is a good topic for this time of year because Christmas is coming up just behind Thanksgiving. This is a big concern for me because I'm not going to be able to be with my family this Thanksgiving. I was very upset at first because I enjoy my holidays with family, but I've been thinking about how grateful I am that my family is safe. Nobody's hurt, and my family will most likely have food on the table unless a tragedy breaks out. So, I just pray that even though I feel unhappy, my family is feeling well.

Journal Excerpts

by Devendre Dockery

There is a thin line between knowledge and ignorance, and it's called a diploma.

I sit here tonight with a feeling of true accomplishment because I go take my GED test tomorrow. But to think how many brothers don't give a damn about getting an education. It's a shame to think my people have that state of mind! We blame white people for a lot of things day in and day out, but what we fail to realize is they throw so many opportunities our way day in and day out! We have to get up and reach for those opportunities every chance we get, even if you are already on your way up, always take time to help out others. You see those who have, and are going to have, a big influence on those who don't care about getting up in life. We need successful brothers and sisters to look up to, that are known to contribute back to the community.

You see, blacks feel that once you become successful and forget all about where you come from "you're a sell-out!" Those negative thoughts are turned into negative energy that causes "I don't care" type of attitudes. Those negative thoughts can just as easily be turned into positive energy used for reading, writing or even spiritual activities. I am not going to get into why these types of attitudes were created in my people, because that will take too long and has too many causes to explain and define. But a solution that has worked throughout time is simply passing the knowledge or just saying an uplifting word to someone everyday. Everyone has to be as positive as you can be just to change the negative thoughts and energy in some of our underachieving brothers and sisters. Together we stand; divided we fall.

Why the Afro-American male should succeed in life.

The importance of education is one of utmost importance to everyone, but to the Afro-American male; it is the main purpose to strive for. You see, the black male is an endangered species, and to add to that problem, most of them are uneducated. So you can see the importance of education to the black male. We, as a race, are in a major catastrophe at the moment and the uneducated black males are not helping by giving off the negative image that young black males find so likable. The big neighborhood hero image isn't so bad if they tell the kids something positive. When they say that black women hold the race together, that is very true. But it is the black man who we need to push our race forward! Adam didn't multiply the world by himself and the black race isn't gonna get straightened out by strong black females only. If only the black male understood his role in society, I think he would be a hell of a catalyst in our educational development.

The role that the black male plays is one of many, ranging from spiritual, political, educational, parental, and especially the positive role model for our young. Perseverance and determination are the key factors in succeeding in life. These are characteristics that black people are born with! So, even though the odds may be stacked heavily against you, there is still no reason why you shouldn't succeed in this major goal. And, when this most important goal is achieved, it should be used not only for your well-

being, but also for future generations as well. Remember, successful brothers play a major role in the community. So, with these few uplifting words, I challenge you to do what isn't expected of you by society, my brothers.

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It has been more than nine months since I came to the United States. I experienced a lot of struggles and hardships since I came here. But, I have never regretted coming to the United States despite the struggles I have experienced, because I have had a lot of precious experiences that I couldn't have had in Japan.

The reason I came to the United States was to improve my English skills to communicate with foreign people. I thought it was wonderful to communicate with people whose cultures were totally different from mine. And, it is really wonderful! It's really nice to make friends who are not Japanese. I can learn a lot of things such as cultural backgrounds, history, customs, life-styles, etc. from non-Japanese people. This is what I really expected. Going to college or getting good scores on a test is not so important to me. Communicating with people and learning a lot of things that I can't learn from text books are the most important things for me. I have had a good time here learning a lot of new things.

I have had a lot of hardships, too. Because Japanese culture is totally different from others, there were a lot of misunderstandings between me and others. At first, I didn't know how to react to foreign people. I was afraid of speaking English. Some people thought I was odd because I didn't act the way American people act. It was often hard to make friends with foreigners. Sometimes religious differences became a big problem to get to know each other. I sometimes missed my family so much that I cried. But the biggest hardship was that I often couldn't make people understand what I wanted to say. Because of my poor English, people often couldn't understand what I said, and I came to know how difficult it is to communicate with foreigners.

As I mentioned, I have never regretted coming to America. Compared to the wonderful experience I had, hardships are trivial. I get enough rewards from my stay in America. The only thing I wish now is that I will be able to help cross-cultural communication in the future by using my experience that I gained during my stay in the United States.

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Receiving education in a foreign country away from home has created hardships for me. On the other hand, receiving this education is beneficial to my future. Facing the hardships while receiving the education in a foreign country has been one of the difficult tasks in my life. For instance, learning a second language is one of the first problems I had to face. Secondly, I had to learn to adopt a culture that I had never experienced while working hard to make ends meet. It is also hard to leave behind all

of my friends and make new friends here.

Alternatively, I have a number of rewards that I expect from my education such as receiving advanced computer education that I cannot receive in my native country. Obviously, I will be able to get a good job in my native country with such advanced education. I will have learned a second language I will never forget. Even though I am facing some hardships, the rewards I will receive will bring prosperity to my life.

Muhammad Rafique Usman

Dreams

by Lucero Schlinkman

Many years ago, the passion grew in me to study something with which I could help people with low resources or no resources at all. I decided to become a dentist because it is the best way to help children who are so defenseless in the situation of life, especially when they have a physical problem. I started my dental studies in Colombia and I had a lot of problems because all the information about new technologies was written in English. That motivated me to study my second language.

My country has many resources, but we don't have the technology for exploitation; Colombia pays a lot of money to other countries to exploit its resources. This is the reason that my country doesn't have enough money. But the people have the courage to make the dream come true. It's not on my mind to make a fortune; I just want to relieve the pain of those less fortunate with my work. Also, I would want to listen and to give consolation to those in need.

A year ago, I was teaching in my city and I decided to leave my job and family to come to the United States to learn English. In the future, this will give me an opportunity to understand the new technologies which will allow me to work better. I want to go to the University and study TMJ (temporal mandibular joint). This is a new specialization that studies the joint between the lower jaw and the upper maxilar. A disorder in this joint can cause many problems such as pain in your neck, muscle pain in your face, headaches, problems with eating and problems with dental restoration.

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The Only Exciting Thing that Happened to Me

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The only exciting thing that happened in my life was when I passed the GED exam. I proved to myself that anything is possible. If you want something, you can do it, too. I hope you try it because when you try it you're going to feel like me -- knowing that you can be anything we want to be in life.

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Basic education in the first years of a person's life is very important and essential. Under proper training, and supervision, it shows what potential a child has. If the teacher is alert, he or she may pick up on learning disabilities such as loss of hearing and/or poor vision. With these obstacles taken care of, a child can go on to his or her full learning ability.

Once a person is out of school and willing, learning is an everyday happening. It doesn't matter what a person is involved with or what he's doing, somewhere there is learning involved.

While living near Penn State University, I have met a couple of people who were "professional students" -- either too lazy or too scared to go out into the world and apply what they learned at a regular job. I am not a smart person, but I get irritated at people who continue to keep a lazy brain and won't even try to learn a simple task when I know they are very capable of learning anything but are content to be where they are.

To me, learning is an everyday experience from something accidental to something very sophisticated. Where would mankind be if doctors stopped learning when they left medical school or musicians stopped learning after they conquered one song on their instrument? Where would researchers be if they didn't learn more in their research?

I'm glad I've got the brain and the ability to continue to learn more than I already know. If I had completely stopped learning years ago, I wouldn't be back in school wanting to learn more and to find out what my potential can be.

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Once a person is out of school and willing, learning is an everyday happening. It doesn't matter what a person is involved with or what he's doing, somewhere there is learning involved.

While living near Penn State University, I have met a couple of people who were "professional students" -- either too lazy or too scared to go out into the world and apply what they learned at a regular job. I am not a smart person, but I get irritated at people who continue to keep a lazy brain and won't even try to learn a simple task when I know they are very capable of learning anything but are content to be where they are.

To me, learning is an everyday experience from something accidental to something very sophisticated. Where would mankind be if doctors stopped learning when they left medical school or musicians stopped learning after they conquered one song on their instrument? Where would researchers be if they didn't learn more in their research?

I'm glad I've got the brain and the ability to continue to learn more than I already know. If I had completely stopped learning years ago, I wouldn't be back in school wanting to learn more and to find out what my potential can be.

If our brain stopped being teachable at a certain age of our lives, I wonder what kind of culture we would be?

My heart goes out to the loved ones who are left behind. When a loved one takes his or her own life in vain, I know the impact it has on a person's life. I can relate to these people because two of the dearest people in my life have taken their very own lives.

Sometimes they would cry for help, but no one would listen to their cries for help. Maybe we never knew what was really going on inside them. When it happens with no warning, you're left behind with all the guilt and blame. You think you could have stopped someone you love and who is close to you from killing him or herself. So you go on in life blaming yourself, feeling guilty, helpless, and you live with it for the rest of your life.

We all are angry as hell at these people who take their precious lives for no reason. But we have to forgive them and stop blaming ourselves for the actions they took in taking their very own lives. Let's all move on in life and make peace within ourselves.

I feel if we know someone is talking about hurting him or herself, we can try helping them. One way is by getting the person you love in your family or your friend some counseling. In this way, we might save someone from committing suicide.

Lisa D. Battiato

What I Am Looking Forward To

by Ruben I. Marrero

I am looking forward to finishing school and getting a job so I can give my children a happy and secure future. Also, I want to see my niece finish high school and go to college. I am looking forward to seeing my mother and younger brother come to live in Reading in their own house or apartment.

My Dream Car

by José Acuapa Fabian

Last week, when I crossed Lancaster Avenue in the south part of Reading, I saw my dream car in a car dealer's lot. It's a red Ferrari Testarossa. This is the most beautiful vehicle made for man. That's my personal opinion.

I think if I want to make that dream real, I will need to work very hard. The first step that I will do is to learn to speak and to write English well. This is most important for me because when I can write and speak English well, I will get a good job with a good salary too. And maybe, I can buy my dream car in the near future. Meanwhile, I'm trying to learn and to speak English all I can in my class and sometimes, when I'm looking at my Ferrari Testarossa on the car dealer's lot. It's waiting for me!

Our Feelings

by Haydee Millayes

My husband and I were going to buy a car and that day the money for the car had to be used to go to Puerto Rico because my father was sick. I was feeling sad because we didn't buy the car, but I felt happy because I saw my family in Puerto Rico.

On My Vacation

by Yaneth Ruiz

On my vacation, I would like to go to New York because I have relatives living there. I would also like to go because I go dancing with my sister and my cousins. I also get to know new places that are very interesting. I like to go to eat Colombian food. I like to go to the beach because I see white sea gulls flying over me. Definitely, I love to go to New York.

My Favorite Holiday

by Kim Pham

I hate war! I love independence and freedom so I like Independence Day in the United States. It's celebrated on July 4th each year in the states and territories of the United States. Independence Day is an occasion for shows, games, sports, military music and fireworks. The fireworks and the firing of guns and cannons on this holiday causes many people death and injury each year. Each year on July 4th my family goes to camp for a week at the beach. We enjoy watching shows, fishing and fireworks.

The Time the Tower Rocked

by Jean Dillon

The day was snowy and Friday. At twelve seventeen it was time for lunch. A time to see if your friends had a good idea of where to go. A time to talk about what you are hungry for. A time to go! It was not a time to think of the one hundred and tenth floor you are on. Or a time to think of the thirteen thousand people who may be in the tower. Not a time to think of the students who come to see the tower you work in. Not a time to think of the Secret Service cars parked beneath you. Not a time to think of the subway. Not a time to think you may have to leave this tower in darkness, smoke and chaos.

The time is twelve eighteen. The time has come. First, you feel the tower rock; then, the lights go out. You pick up the phone, and it doesn't work. It is time to go. You have learned not to use the elevators, but to go to the stairs. Now is the time you find the people who will help you through the dark and the smoke. You never thought of the time it would take to go down the stairs. Time stands still.

How I Met My Husband

by Basty Ramos

How did I meet my husband? Last year two lovely girls, who are friends of mine, came to America for the summer. The girls and I were neighbors in Mexico. I love them very much. The younger was my pupil when she studied to be a secretary.

When they met William, they loved him very much because he was kind to them and helped them to know the city. Sometimes he gave them a ride to work.

One day they asked him if he had a wife. He answered that he didn't have one. Then they said, "He will be the husband for Mamis." They named me Mamis and William started to name them "my children."

Then, when the summer was gone, they gave William my address and my phone number. He called me pretty soon and we started our relationship by calls and letters. We got to know each other only by photographs. But both of us were sure that we were the one for each other. The first time we saw each other was when we got married.

My Determination

by Migdalia Medina

When I decided to come back to school, I gave it a lot of thought. I wanted it to be a firm decision. Not that I'm here, I don't regret it because I never realized how helpful this experience has turned out. I'm also planning to finish my goal which is my General Educational Development.

My determination began when I got married three years ago and I saw myself in a house where I couldn't contribute to the expenses. I started to feel frustrated and depressed. Then, I knew I needed some good way of turning my life in a different direction. At the time, I was getting very sick and mean to other people, even my loved ones, because deep inside I was dissatisfied with what I was doing. Now I'm keeping busy recalling things I once knew but have since forgotten. I'm hoping that in the future I will also help my family with the daily life expenses.

All About Me

by Carmen Santana

My name is Carmen. I'm twenty five years old and I have five beautiful children. I came to the United States when I was thirteen. I've been here for eleven years. Life wasn't easy after I had my second child. I was attending school at the same time. At that time, I decided to quit school and dedicate the time to my children. After nine years, I heard of the Even Start program. I decided to enroll in the program.

The program has really been helpful academically. For example, my reading, English and math have improved. Most importantly, I can sit down and work with my children. Also, I'm attending the Advanced English Program which is located at the Southwest Middle School. It's improved my English even more.

The purpose of forcing myself is that I want to finish school and get my GED, a good job and to help children in the future. I'd like to thank those who are helping me to go forward with my education.

My Life in the United States
by Inpong Somsamayvong

The first time I came to the United States I couldn't speak English at all. My friend helped me to go somewhere to learn. I went to ESL classes. About one year after that I got a job with my friend. I tried to speak. Now I know how to speak a little bit of English. Five years ago my life was difficult. I have a family to take care of. My son is nine years old. My wife has a job, too. On the weekends I always stay home and look at TV with my son.

The Mennonites in Paraguay
by Walter Käthler

There are around 25,000 Mennonites in Paraguay living in about twenty different settlements (colonies). The biggest three are in West Paraguay, which is called Chaco. The rest live in East Paraguay.

According to the historical background of the colonies, there are also differences from one colony to another. There are open, free and progressive colonies, and others are more traditional and uncommunicative. The latter are more distinguished because of their rare clothing, their religion and culture.

Let's divide the Mennonites into three categories. The first group is the people from Chaco. These people are the most open to the Paraguayan society. The population is about 14,000 individuals. A good education is very important and many young people attend universities. They cooperate in economic programs and help other Paraguayans to make their own settlements. In the Chaco, the Mennonites evangelize, educate and care for about 14,000 Indians. The Mennonites also have a radio transmission: ZP-30, "The Voice of the Paraguayan Chaco." They transmit in eight different languages. These colonies also have a leprosy hospital and help in the neuropsychiatric hospital in Asunción to treat therapeutic and psychological conditions. The Mennonites also have two Bible Schools to prepare spiritual leaders.

The second group comes from Canada and Mexico and are the more traditional. They want to keep their own culture and ways of living. They don't want cultural or spiritual renovation. The schools go only to the seventh grade, and the main job is farming.

The third group is the smallest and least known group in Paraguay. These people come from the USA and their language is English, but they also speak very good Spanish. In school they teach English and Spanish.

There are reasons for the differences among Mennonites. There is no central doctrine, authority or structure for all Mennonites throughout the world. Each church member has a spiritual and moral responsibility according to the Bible. The Mennonite religion is international like Christianity itself and is not made up of one ethnic group or race. To be a Mennonite means to be a Christian, to be a church member and to have faith in the Holy Bible. It is a way to live and not a race or nation.

These are the main teachings of the Mennonite Churches:

1) The Apostolic Creed, as for all Christians, is the same for the Mennonites.

2) The Bible, the word of God, is the highest authority for faith and conduct.
3) The church is a community of baptized believers, after confession of faith in Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord, and to serve the Lord in His life. (Matthew 28:18-20)
4. Christ is the only way to salvation. (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Corinthians 3:11)
5) The gospel is a message of peace and reconciliation with God and other Christians. (Matthew 5-7)

My Plans for the Weekend

by Antonia Marti

This weekend I want to go to New York to visit my friend Rosita. I want to go there because I have a lot of fun. We'll go to the stores, to the parks, and we'll take a train to the uptown cities. My grandson likes to ride the train. In Reading, I'm usually alone, but in New York I'll be enjoying the company of my friend and my grandson.

About Me

by Sandra Rivera

My name is Sandra Rivera. I was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico. I have four children. Their names are Ramon, age eleven; David, age ten; Rosa, age eight; and Amy, age six. They all go to Thomas Ford school. They enjoy learning English. I'm also going to Even Start to learn English. I am very happy to be in this class with such nice classmates.

Christmas

by Sonia Natal

To me, Christmas is sharing and sharing with my husband and my children. However, for me, every day is Christmas because I have Christ in my heart. Christmas also is being with loved ones. This Christmas, however, will be a little sad because two months ago my father and my grandmother died. I still feel happy, on the other hand, because I have Christ in my heart. He is with me. For this reason, my Christmas will be happy.

The Field Trip to the Hands On House

by Raquel Rosado

The Hands on House is a museum for children. On Tuesday, November 10, 1992 the Even Start program went to the Hands On House by bus. When we got there we had a good time. They had different rooms with a lot of fun things to do. Julissia

Rosado is my daughter. She loved the room with the piano and she also liked the room where the children can use hard hats.

In my opinion, this field trip helped my daughter learn how to behave and how to share.

Ramadan and Akhtar

by Roshan Popal

My name is Roshan Popal. I'm from Afghanistan. My religion is Muslim. On February 22, we will start Ramadan for one month. During that time, we may only eat a meal at sundown. The day of the new moon, we will have a special Akhtar holiday (March 23, 1993). In the morning, we wake up early to pray to God. After that, we go to the mosque. There we have holiday prayer. Then, in the mosque, we have a big meal.

How I Spent My Christmas

by William Ramos

I spent my Christmas in Mexico. I enjoyed Mexico very much. The people in Mexico were very nice to me. They treated me like a member of the family. I enjoyed the food they gave me. I tasted many different dishes. The food was delicious.

Another thing I like is that their houses are made the same way as in Puerto Rico and that style of living remains in my country. They have orange trees, banana plants and other trees like in Puerto Rico. The best part of my vacation was I got married the day before Christmas. My wife's family is very nice. They fed me three times a day for two days. I had many different and delicious dishes.

My Goals

by Mildred Castro

When I came to Reading my goal was to read, write and spell English. I have a good teacher in the school that I attend and she helps everybody to learn English and to spell and write. Education is important for a successful future.

My Life

by Apolinar Rosario

My name is Apolinar Rosario. I am a Puerto Rican. I came from Puerto Rico in 1982 to Reading, Pennsylvania. After I arrived here, I started working with Puerto Rican and Mexican immigrants and farm workers.

I worked with Philadelphia Legal Services in order to complete the job. My job was a paralegal, or attorney's assistant. I liked the job. I enjoyed doing the job.

I have six other brothers. I am the only one that attended school. I'd like to be a lawyer in the future.

My Family - My Inspiration

by Marinalva Lima Snyder

My family is very important to me. My father is a very special man in my life. He is a good friend for me and my eight brothers and sisters. He always works hard to take care of the family. Furthermore, my mother is a wonderful person. I love her very much because she gives our family perfect examples of how to live life. Everything that I am today is because of my father and mother. I thank them for it. In addition, my grandma was very close to me. We always talked about important things. She always told me she prayed for our family and friends. She was a beautiful and unique lady with precious feelings for everyone. I miss my grandma very much. God called her before I came to the United States. Now she is an angel in heaven.

I was a very happy child. A very important event that I will never forget is my first communion at the age of eleven. We had a very beautiful party. I had a beautiful dress. Everything was very special but the most special thing was my feeling about God. There was a unique feeling inside my heart. I was very happy.

There was always something to do at my house. There was homework, helping my mother, and playing with my sister's friends. My favorite subject at school was Portuguese. My favorite sport was volleyball. Also, I enjoyed television shows, news and good movies. Finally, I enjoyed delicious food and simple clothes.

I hope to preserve my family with very much love. I also hope to get a job soon in order to complete my personal goal. I enjoy helping people, especially children and old people. In conclusion, I would like to help children in the fields of education and health because children are the future of the world.

About Me

by Vincenzina Giandomenico

My name is Vincenzina. I am an immigrant. I came from Italy twenty-three years ago. I left behind my family, my mother, two brothers, and two sisters. My father passed away a long time ago. He died very young - thirty-nine years old.

Here I am in this country with my husband. We have five children - two in college and three in elementary school. All these years I never went to school, which was wrong. If I had gone to school, today I would have a better job and I could help my children study and help them with homework. But, I am glad that I finally decided to go to school. I am very excited about learning English. This is a beautiful country. It is a country of opportunity for all. I still miss my country.

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